

Anti-Taleban alliance says Bamiyan under no immediate threat

KABUL (AFP) — Afghanistan's opposition Hezb-i-Wahdat party, which still controls the central province of Bamiyan, Saturday dismissed claims the hardline Taleban militia was advancing on Bamiyan city.

Bahram told AFP that militia troops were in Saighan, 30 kilometres to the north of the city, and had not advanced as was earlier claimed by Taleban authorities.

He said Taleban jet fighters had carried out several sorties on Bamiyan city and its still-operational airport.

Heavy anti-aircraft gunfire prevented the jets from hitting their targets, and instead dropped their bombs on surrounding hill-tops, Bahram said by satellite telephone from Bamiyan.

He added that no major infantry engagement had taken place.

Abdul Hai Mutman, a Taleban spokesman speaking from southern Kandahar province, said the religious militia had advanced to about 10 kilometres north of the city amid heavy fighting.

The Taleban closed in on Bamiyan after eight opposition commanders in adjacent Baghlan province Wednesday switched sides, aiding the militia's southward advance.

Hezb-i-Wahdat is dominated by a Muslim Shiite and ethnic Hazara population, who inhabit the isolated and besieged central provinces of Afghanistan.

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POLICE WATCH HAMAS DEMONSTRATION IN GAZA: Palestinian policemen watch Hamas demonstrators Saturday during a demonstration in Gaza City to protest against the arrest of a Hamas activist. Police used batons to beat back several dozen Hamas supporters who turned out for a street rally for activists of the group held in prisons (Reuters photo)

Yilmaz to discuss Taleban, PKK in Tehran

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's Foreign Minister Ismail Cem left Saturday for a three-day official visit to Iran, the Anatolia news agency reported.

It is the first such trip by a Turkish foreign minister to Tehran in more than five years.

Cem is expected to discuss developments in Afghanistan and Kurdish rebel activities on the Turkish-Iranian border with his counterpart, Kamal Kharazi, and other Iranian officials.

Turkey shares Iranian concern over the rise of the Islamic Taleban militia in Afghanistan.

Ankara supports the Uzbek General Abdul Rachid Dostum, who was pushed out of the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif by the Taleban in August.

Cem's talks with Kharazi and other officials would focus primarily on the situation in Afghanistan, Anatolia said.

But the Turkish FM is also expected to raise the issue of alleged Kurdish rebel infiltrations into Turkey from Iran.

The Turkish government last week accused Iran of openly supporting the Turkey-based Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK) in its armed rebellion against Ankara and of allowing its fighters to mount cross-border operations against Turkish troops from Iranian soil.

Cem will begin his talks in Tehran on Sunday and is to return to Ankara on Tuesday.

Turkey and its eastern neighbour mended their ties only a few months ago after more than a year of escalated tensions.

Their relations were marred in February last year when Turkey expelled Iran's ambassador in Ankara, charging him with seeking to promote an Iranian-style Islamic revolution in Turkish territory. Iran retaliated by expelling Turkey's ambassador.

In May, the countries sent new ambassadors to each other's capitals.

The two countries signed a \$20 billion agreement for the sale of Iranian natural gas to Turkey and are now building a pipeline.

Their two-way trade totalled nearly \$800 million last year, according to Turkish figures.

Kuwaiti court to give verdict on editor later this month

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — A Kuwaiti court will decide later this month whether to uphold a six-month jail handed down to a newspaper editor for publishing a joke deemed offensive to Islam, lawyers said Saturday.

"The court heard the defence lawyer's remarks on the prosecution's testimony today, and said it will deliver a verdict on September 28," said Imad Al Seif, the lawyer for Mohammad Al Saqer, editor-in-chief of Al Qabas newspaper.

The defence is calling for the court to halt the case and refer it to the Constitution Court to review Kuwait's 1961 law governing the press and publications.

"The court has two choices. The first would see the case passing to the constitutional court. The second would see it passing judgement on Saqer and Al Qabas itself," Seif said.

"I am not that optimistic. It is only 50-50," he added. "But politically, I think it would be very hard to uphold a sentence like this."

Saqer was sentenced in July to six months with hard labour and an Egyptian contributor who penned the "Adam and Eve" joke, Ibrahim Marzouk, was given a six-month jail sentence in absentia.

But the appeal court suspended both jail sentences as well as a week-long suspension order against Al Qabas, Kuwait's most influential daily.

Libya sends aid planes to Sudan despite embargo

TUNIS (R) — Libya said Saturday it had sent two planes loaded with food and medical aid to Sudan to help with flood relief there, despite a continuing U.N. ban on flights into and out of Libya.

Libyan state radio, monitored in Tunis, said the two planes flew directly to Durgulah in northern Sudan. It said the aid was part of a gesture of solidarity by a group of Saharan countries that includes Sudan, Libya, Chad, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

"We have come to Sudan to announce our full solidarity with brother Sudan... and that we are ready to share our food and medicine," Libyan Minister for Health and Social Security Soliman Mohamad Al Ghomari, who went on the aid flight, was quoted as saying by the radio.

Since 1992 Libya has been under United Nations sanctions, including an air ban, for failing to hand over two Libyans wanted in connection with the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am airliner over the Scottish town of Lockerbie, which killed 270 people.

Libya last month sent a plane of medicines to Sudan to help with losses inflicted by a U.S. missile strike that destroyed a pharmaceutical factory which Washington said was producing chemical weapons.

Kuwaiti press backs Clinton after report

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — The Kuwaiti press backed U.S. President Bill Clinton on Saturday after the publication of a report into his sexual relationship with then-White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

The Arab Times dubbed the "Monica gate" scandal a "litmus test" for the U.S. administration.

"A twenty-something young woman has practically held to ransom the administration of the most powerful nation of earth," the English-language daily said.

The newspaper contended that the scandal could well have repercussions on Washington's global responsibilities, but claimed that it is underpinned by a conspiracy orchestrated by American political groups.

"The ambition of these groups is to seize the reins of the administration and the Lewinsky affair has given them a loaded gun with which to pressure the incumbent administration," it said.

Salah Al Hashim, a columnist for the Arabic daily Al Rai Al Aam, praised the American system, which, he said, was working well to achieve justice.

The fact that Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr could pursue his investigations without prejudice and fear, and even "grill" the most powerful man in the world proved the transparency of the American system, he said.

"Kenneth Starr is not only an independent investigator but a symbol for the empowerment of people against anybody who preaches power, including the president," Hashim said.

political views, officials and analysts have said. But their invitation together with 18 prominent figures for a meeting with the Regent last week to discuss the challenges facing the country, was seen as a sign of their "rehabilitation."

Nablus-born Masri served briefly as prime minister in 1991 when Jordan was preparing for the Middle East peace conference in Madrid.

Obeidat, who is currently away from the country, is a former intelligence chief who served as prime minister from 1984-1985. He was asked to resign from the Senate four years ago after criticising the 1994 peace treaty with Israel.

He was particularly vocal against the bilateral water arrangements as outlined in the peace deal.

The appointment of Obeidat is viewed as especially significant in light of his earlier dismissal, said an official requesting anonymity.

Both politicians have repeatedly criticised Jordan's foreign policy orientation and domestic policies.

But officials have said the meetings between Masri and the Palace were never terminated, despite his often strong criticisms of the Kingdom's policies, and his decision to boycott the last parliamentary elections.

Masri told the Jordan Times that he is not opposed to the peace treaty with Israel, as much as he is opposed to the way it is being pursued.

"I am against going that far, that fast, when (Israeli Prime Minister) Benjamin Netanyahu is denying the Palestinians their basic rights and is delaying implementing agreements," said Masri.

He said that his role in the Senate may be limited, but he still welcomed his appointment and that of Obeidat as an "important and symbolic step."

Analysts said yesterday that the move may be a sign of renewed commitment to the political liberalisation process that began in 1989, which the opposition including Masri and Obeidat contends, has suffered severe setbacks since the parliamentary elections of 1993, and the signing of the peace treaty with Israel a year later.

"Since the 1994 Washington Declaration (that paved the way for the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel), the thrust of the Kingdom's policies has been towards our foreign policy," Hamameh said.

"Now the peace isn't going anywhere, there are serious economic problems and the previous government created so much tension... we are now looking inward, and focusing on our domestic situation," he continued.

Welcoming the appointment of the two figures, as a possible return to the "spirit of 1989," Izzedine said he believed the move was also aimed at easing public sentiments.

"The government is trying to change the political atmosphere. They know they can't do anything too quickly with the unemployment issue or with poverty. What they can do is (diffuse) the atmosphere, accept different points of view, and try to send the right kind of signals, while working hard on the harder, long-term issues, he said.

'Obeidat, Masri appointments to broaden political base'

(Continued from page 1)

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Ex-Sri Lankan consul sentenced

(Continued from page 1)

Police also found forged adoption documents with the couple.

Shortly after his arrest, Abu Khajil was formally charged with 36 counts of forging documents, usage of forged documents, 36 counts of infant trafficking, possession of unlicensed firearms, import of an illegal wireless radio, abuse of office and forgery of a government seal.

Almost a year later, the Court of First Instance convicted Abu Khajil, who was freed on bail, of selling a baby, attempting to sell another and of forgery of official documents and sentenced him to three years imprisonment with hard labour.

Abu Khajil's attorney then appealed the ruling to the Court of Appeals, which in July of 1997 acquitted Abu Khajil of charges of selling one baby, and attempting to sell another.

At that time, the court said, "no proof existed that the former consul bought or sold any child, rather what happened was an adoption authorised by Jordanian and Dutch laws."

The Court of Appeals then also commuted the forgery charge to a misdemeanour, ruling that Abu Khajil did not forge official documents.

The prosecution appealed the ruling to the Court of Cassation which in December of the same year overturned the Court of Appeals acquittal on the grounds that a 1929 law banning slavery prohibited the sale of babies.

The court ruled that the law also included

provisions that banned any practice that could undermine human freedom whether through treatment of humans as slaves, their deportation or their holding as hostages.

According to TUBEISHAT, Abu Khajil, freed on a JD20,000 bail in April 1997, will not be imprisoned "until the Court of Cassation issues a final ruling in the case."

Abu Khajil is also currently standing trial at the Criminal Court on charges of raping four Sri Lankan women.

All four women are themselves facing charges of perjury, after they changed their initial testimonies.

The Criminal Court, which is awaiting the perjury investigation results, postponed the case until Sept. 29.

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JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 477311-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Cartoon — The Pink Panther
15:20 Cartoon — The Pumpkin Patch
15:30 The Adventures of the Black Stallion
16:00 The American Chart Show
17:00 N.B.A.
18:00 Drama — Bonne Esperance
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Programme — Science Magazine (E-M6)
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Life's Most Embarrassing Moments
20:00 World Net
20:30 Talk Show — Challenges
21:00 Drama — Renegade
22:00 News in English
22:30 Mini-series — "Touching Evil"
23:59 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:54 Fajr
06:13 (Sunrise) Duha
12:32 Dhuhur
16:04 'Asr
18:50 Maghreb
20:09 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811. St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751. Assman International Church Tel. 5865897 German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404 The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654952 St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757 Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440 Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138 Church of Presentation, Sweifeh Tel. 5920146 The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4624757 The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190 Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679 The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052 The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771351 The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261	appearing at different altitudes and winds westerly moderate to active. In Agaba, it will be occasionally dusty, relatively hot, winds northerly moderate to active, and seas calm. Min./Max. temp. Amman 21/31 Agaba 25/38 Deserts 18/34 Jordan Valley 24/38 Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 34, Agaba 41 Humidity readings: Amman 33 per cent, Agaba 30 per cent. Following are the highest temperatures expected today in the following areas: Ajloun 27 Jerash 33 Um Qays 33 Madaba 33 Petra 34 Dead Sea 39	Al Asema pharmacy 4637055 Naioukh pharmacy 4623672 Al Salam pharmacy 4636730 Yacoub pharmacy 4644945 Shmeisani pharmacy 4637660 Najm pharmacy 5347632 IRBID: Dr. Lutfi Shalabi 241798 Al Quds pharmacy 4771112 ZARQA: Dr. Akram Haddad 985550 Khalifeh pharmacy 985417	Radio Jordan 4774111 Water Authority 5680100 J. Electricity Authority 5815615 Electric Power Co. 4636381 RJ Flight Information 44-53200 Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200	Greek Catholic Hospital 21:40 Lamaca (add) (RJ) 22:30 Frankfurt, Berlin (RJ) 22:35 Rome (RJ) 22:35 Beirut (add) (RJ) 01:40 Cairo (RJ) 02:55 Other Flights 06:30 Tel Aviv (LA) 08:55 Dubai (EK) 11:30 Sanaa, Ta'iz (Y) 11:30 Kuwait (KU) 12:30 Jeddah (SV) 12:50 Moscow (SU) 13:30 Abu Dhabi (GF) 15:40 Doha (QR) 18:40 Beirut (ME) 19:00 Paris (AF) 20:00 Tel Aviv (LY) 21:00 Cairo (MS) 23:20 Istanbul (TK) 23:35 Lamaca (CY) 01:15 Amsterdam, Beirut (KL) 02:25 Athens, Beirut (OA) 02:40 Belgrade (OK) 03:00 Rome (AZ) 04:15 London (BA) Royal Wings (RW) 10:20 Agaba (arriving at QAIA and proceeding to Marka Airport (RW) 10:35 Tel Aviv (QAIA) (RW) 18:00 Agaba (arriving at Marka Airport) 23:25 Agaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)	06:00 Madrid (RJ) 08:00 Agaba (add) (RJ) 10:45 Frankfurt (RJ) 11:50 Athens, Vienna (RJ) 12:00 Tunis, Rome (RJ) 12:15 Bilbao, Casablanca (RJ) 12:40 Amsterdam, New York (RJ) 13:25 London (RJ) 18:30 Tel Aviv (add) (RJ) 21:20 New Delhi (RJ) 21:25 Jeddah (RJ) 22:00 Damascus (RJ) 22:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ) 22:15 Beirut (add) (RJ) 22:35 Bangkok (RJ) 23:25 Cairo (RJ) 00:15 Sanaa (RJ) 00:50 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ) Other Flights 07:30 Paris (AF) 07:35 Damascus, London (BA) 09:55 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (EK) 12:30 Al Hudaidah (Y) 12:45 Kuwait (KU) 14:00 Jeddah (SV) 14:10 Moscow (SU) 14:25 Doha (GF) 16:30 Doha (QR) 20:00 Beirut (ME) 20:45 Tel Aviv (LY) 22:00 Cairo (MS) 02:15 Beirut, Amsterdam (RJ) 03:40 Belgrade (OK) 03:45 Beirut, Athens (OA) 04:00 Rome (AZ) Royal Wings (RW) 08:00 Agaba (from Marka Airport) (RW) 08:45 Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW) 09:30 Agaba (from Marka Airport) (RW) 21:30 Agaba (from QAIA) (RW)
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WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Temperatures will drop becoming around average with clouds

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Ghaleb Zawaldeh 4736011
Dr. Tawfiq Qub'ain 4623029
Dr. Awni Hawandeh 5332350
Dr. Khalidoun Asfour 5332600
Firas pharmacy 5661912

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555

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School bus, truck collision leaves 19 injured

AMMAN (J.T.) — Nineteen people, including 17 kindergarten students, were slightly injured Saturday when a pickup truck slammed into a school bus in a Zarqa neighbourhood, according to official sources.

The accident occurred at the intersection of Al Izz Ben Abdul Salam St. in the Ramzi neighbourhood, one source said.

The pickup driver, Fawaz Fahma, 38, failed to yield to the bus, which was carrying pupils home, and ran into the right side of the bus, the source added.

"The strong impact caused the bus to turn over," the source told the Jordan Times.

None of the students, aged between five and six, were harmed, said the source.

"There were a couple of children with bruises and slight injuries," he said.

He added that the driver of the bus, Mahmoud Diab, suffered a broken arm.

Sawsan Azzam, 35, a teacher accompanying the pupils, was slightly injured, the source said.

The victims were taken by Civil Defence Department teams to Shabibeh Government Hospital for treatment, and most were discharged, sources said.

Nearby residents complained that the Salam St. witnesses many road accidents.



A SMASHING PERFORMANCE: Jordanian strongman Ra'd Shomahy, who calls himself the 'Arab Samson', Saturday smashes a crate of soft drink bottles with his bandaged arm in Amman. Shomahy, who has performed as a strongman in Arab countries, hopes to show off his strength in the West (Reuters photo)

'Eight petrol stations closed for selling adulterated products'

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company has shut down eight petrol stations this year for allegedly adulterating oil products and has introduced strict controls to ensure that its products conform to set standards and specifications.

Abdul Wahab Zou'bi, the refinery's director general, was quoted Saturday by the Arabic daily Al Aswaq as saying that 18 petrol stations were

closed down in 1997 on similar charges.

The stations were closed after refinery inspection teams discovered they were mixing oil products smuggled out of Iraq with the refinery's products, regular-grade petrol with first-grade petrol and kerosene with diesel or water, and other forms of manipulation.

Spot checks and laboratory tests helped the refinery discover the adulterated products, which Zou'bi said failed to conform to set specifications and standards.

At present, 300 petrol stations operate in the country, of which 15 supply products to major institutions such as phosphate and cement companies, Zou'bi said. He added that the refinery owns only six of the 15 stations while the private sector owns the rest.

In the past two months, the refinery approved the establish-

ment of 85 additional petrol stations, Zou'bi noted.

The refinery owns 600 oil tanker trucks, but only 320-350 are used per day to refill petrol stations' reserves, he said.

Zou'bi added that since the refinery does not have enough manpower to monitor each station continuously, spot checks are carried out and samples are taken of the products sold to the public.

"In our meeting, we will focus on the need for the government to control the labour market and prevent foreign workers from working illegally at the expense of Jordanians," Emrani said.

Of the more than 350,000 foreign workers, chiefly working in the agricultural and construction sectors, only 50,000 have valid work permits.

"We will also focus on some loopholes in the current Labour Law that are posing daily threats to workers," he added.

He said the federation wanted the cancellation of Article 23 of the law, which gives employers the right to fire employees without notice while giving him/her a month's salary in compensation.

"Workers need to feel secure in their jobs. Employers should understand that they do not have the right to dismiss workers arbitrarily," Emrani explained.

The federation is also pushing for amendments to introduce clearer interpretations to ambiguities in articles 28 and 31, which set conditions under which workers can be dismissed.

Under article 28, employers can fire workers if they are drunk, forge identity cards and documents, inflict losses on the venture or are sentenced by a criminal court.

According to article 31, employers can fire employees on an open contract or suspend their contract under any perceived pretext such as financial and technical problems.

"The government should put tougher controls on random dismissals and employers should consult with the Labour Ministry and the federation before taking any hasty step," Emrani said.

He said the federation will urge Tarawneh to agree to their long-term demand for setting a minimum wage for workers to help curb unemployment, officially estimated at 15 per cent and independently at 27 per cent.

A number of politicians and labour leaders believe minimum wages would attract more unemployed Jordanians to a market saturated with foreign workers who accept very low salaries with no benefits such as health insurance and social security.

But some economists and social experts believe a minimum wage could gradually help uproot the "culture of shame" that is preventing many Jordanians from taking what they consider as menial and under-paid jobs.

"It could help create incentives for those who do not want to take up a job because of the Eib [degrading] culture," said one sociologist.

Others are against it on the grounds that it would come at the expense of laying off female workers and disabled Jordanians and would push up inflation, officially estimated at 6.5 per cent.

"A minimum wage should be studied in accordance with the cost of living index and the per capita income rates," said Emrani.

The annual per capita income in Jordan, a country of 4.2 million people, stands at around JD1,400.

Unions to discuss labour market controls, legislation at meeting with Tarawneh

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Leaders of the 220,000-strong General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions will ask Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh at a meeting on Sunday to tighten controls over the 350,000 foreign workers in the country as part of nationwide efforts to curb soaring unemployment.

Federation Vice President Fathallah Emrani told the Jordan Times the delegation would also press for setting a minimum wage for workers and for introducing changes to some parts of the one-year old Labour Law to help improve working conditions.

His Majesty King Hussein asked the Tarawneh government in a Letter of Designation on Aug. 20 to focus on combating social ills plaguing the country, such as growing unemployment and poverty as well as corruption, nepotism and favouritism.

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AMMAN — Interior Minister Nayef Qadi Saturday said the government would consider pardoning an unspecified number of prisoners following an appeal by a parliamentary committee.

Qadi said the appeal was made during a meeting with the Lower House's Public Freedoms Committee on Thursday.

"It was merely a proposal by the lawmakers which we promised to discuss with ministry officials. But so far, we have no details or plans in this regard," the minister told the Jordan Times.

Committee chairman Mohammad Azzaydeh said the committee has a list of prisoners it believes are eligible for pardon and will submit it to the government soon.

Azzaydeh said the proposed pardon would not extend to political prisoners. He did not elaborate.

Also Saturday, the minister denied news reports that 20 members of the outlawed Al Tahrir Party were arrested in several parts of the Kingdom on charges of distributing an anti-government statement.

"These reports are baseless. We have no information that any member of this group was detained," Qadi said.

"Any arrest should be based on a warrant from the concerned authorities. We have no information about such arrests."

Last week, Al Sabeel weekly reported that at least 20 Al Tahrir members were arrested, including its spokesperson Ata Abu Rishbeh. Al Tahrir (Liberation) was formed in the West Bank in the 1950s and calls for the replacement of all Arab governments with a caliphate system.

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AMMAN (J.T.) — The Civil Status and Passports Department Saturday began issuing birth certificates in English as well as Arabic at department branches with computer services.

Muhieddin Kilani, director of the department's public relations section, told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the new service was required due to the growing number of citizens going abroad to study or live and wishing to have the birth certificates in English.

No extra fees are charged for this service, according to Kilani.

Department officials were quoted Saturday by the Arabic daily Al Sha'ar as saying that the new measure will obviate the need for certified offices to do the translations. They added that this will save petitioners' money as well as the time required by the Foreign Ministry to validate the certificates so that they can be accepted abroad.

The officials said the department plans to expand the service to other documents, including certificates of death, divorce and marriage.

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Bosnia vote under way after voter list problems

SARAJEVO (R) — The international envoy supervising Bosnia's general elections Saturday admitted "human and technical errors" had temporarily prevented voters from casting ballots at more than 100 voting stations, throwing the poll's start into disarray.

But Ambassador Robert Barry told a Sarajevo news conference the problems were rapidly being solved and that only 20 to 40 of the 2,189 polling stations were not yet working normally.

He dismissed as exaggerated media reports of far more widespread problems, as voting in Bosnia's second such election since the 1992-1995 war got under way.

In the capital, Sarajevo, only four out of some 250 stations had not yet opened, he told reporters.

Despite preparations costing \$35 million and involving some 10,000 people, Barry said computers had printed out some erroneous registers, others had been sent to the wrong places and some supervisors had been incorrectly briefed.

"There was a definite glitch in the system, but nobody will lose the right to vote as a result of this," Barry said.

First reports were of a strong early turnout, and Barry repeated predictions that by the time the polls close Sunday evening, 70 to 80 per cent of voters will have cast their ballots.

But confirming reports of angry crowds around some closed polling stations, Barry said: "In some areas where polling stations had not opened on time... crowds gathered and they were not happy."

"There will always be people who will try to exaggerate problems to make a political point." But he said there were no reports of violence.

Reuters correspondents in the Bosnian Serb capital of Banja Luka and the southern city of Mostar, which is divided between Croats and Muslims, reported that most of the closed polling stations had been those serving "absentee" voters — people unable to return to their homes in areas now controlled by other ethnic groups.

One of the displaced people, Gojko Grubic, 68, a retired railway worker, told Reuters: "The worst thing that could happen is for the people to lose patience in this rain and go home. It is very important for us that we are represented in the cantonal assembly. These elections are crucial for the return of refugees to their homes."

For the first time since the 43-month war ended, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which has organised the election, is relying on civilian police rather than international peace troops to safeguard it.

In Sarajevo, a single policeman was deployed at each polling station.

But the OSCE said units of the 32,000 member NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia were standing by to react rapidly in case of any trouble.

In simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections, voters in the Muslim-Croat federation and the Serb republic which together comprise

Bosnia will choose the three members of the co-presidency, the Bosnian Serb president, the combined state parliament, the separate parliaments in the two "entities" and a welter of regional assemblies.

International envoys hope to see gains by "moderates" — code for politicians who accept the U.S.-brokered 1995 Dayton accords that ended the war — at the expense of "hardliners" — those who still base their policies on ethnic separation.

The outcome will show whether voters are ready to opt for a united country and economic and political ties with the West, or will stick to their own ethnic groups.

Carlos Westendorp, the Spanish diplomat now the international High Representative overseeing the Bosnian peace process, acknowledged that this was the main problem in these elections.

"When you ask people 'What is your main interest?' their main interest is economic — their situation, jobs, social security, privatisation etc.," he told the Western-sponsored FERN radio Friday.

"But when you ask at the same time — and this is the bad news — 'will you vote for a leader who belongs to a different ethnic group?' a great percent will say 'No.' So you see, we have to overcome that paradox." The polls are open until 7 p.m. (1800 GMT) Saturday and from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. (0600-1500 GMT) Sunday.

Preliminary results may start to come in Tuesday, but final totals may take up to a week longer.



A Bosnian refugee from Srebrenica holds her head Saturday as she waits for a polling station to be opened in the Sarajevo suburb of Vogosca on the first day of the country's general elections. Bosnia's general elections got off to a ragged start when computer problems prevented voters casting their ballots at more than 100 of the 2,189 polling stations across the divided country (Reuters photo)

British army ends daily patrols in Belfast

BELFAST (R) — The British army Saturday ended its daily patrols on the streets of Belfast, signalling hope that an end may be in sight to the guerrilla violence that has plagued the Northern Ireland capital for decades.

Ronnie Flanagan, head of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, said the decision to end street patrols by armed soldiers was a response to a "very significant reduction" in the threat of guerrilla violence.

The last foot patrol in the capital was carried out just before midday Saturday in teeming rain under leaden skies.

The army will continue its patrols in other areas of Northern Ireland for the time being. Army patrols in Protestant and Catholic strongholds of Belfast had become a regular part of daily life in the city.

They were withdrawn following ceasefires in 1994 by the mainstream Irish Republican Army (IRA) and its Protestant guerrilla rivals but were reintroduced earlier this year after a spate of tit-for-tat killings between dissident Protestant and Republican

guerrillas in January. All but one of the array of pro-British and republican armed groups which fought for more than 30 years have now declared ceasefires — two of them in the month since the bombing by a republican splinter group in the town of Omagh which killed 29 people.

Political tension in the British-ruled province has also receded with Thursday's first one-to-one meeting between staunch Protestant leader David Trimble and his old arch foe Gerry Adams, leader of the IRA's political wing Sinn Féin.

The Trimble-Adams meeting underlined their commitment to the "Good Friday" peace accord signed in April which set up a power-sharing assembly with limited powers to govern Northern Ireland. The first guerrilla prisoners were released from jail on Friday under the agreement.

Only the small Continuity IRA, made up of hardline defectors from the mainstream armed republican group, remains publicly and violently opposed to the peace agreement.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Karachi gunmen kill former official

KARACHI (AFP) — A co-defendant in a corruption case against the husband of ex-premier Benazir Bhutto was shot dead in Pakistan's largest city Karachi overnight, police said Saturday. Sajjad Hussain, a former chairman of state-run Pakistan Steel, was sprayed with bullets by several men minutes after he left his house in the seaside Sunset Boulevard area late Friday, they said. Six other people, including two activists of Karachi's influential ethnic party the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), were killed in other parts of the city Friday, police said. Hussain was accused along with Asif Ali Zardari, Bhutto's husband, of receiving kickbacks on a contract during Bhutto's three-year rule. Hussain was released on bail in May last year. He was to appear before an Election (Accountability) Bench of a high court in Rawalpindi in the same case Monday.

China hails defeat of Taiwan U.N. bid

BEIJING (AP) — China Saturday praised the latest defeat of an effort to gain membership for rival Taiwan in the United Nations. The defeat Friday of a proposal for Taiwan to receive U.N. representation "fully demonstrated the firm will of the vast majority of U.N. member states to safeguard the U.N. Charter ... and the norms of international law," the state-run Xinhua News Agency quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao as saying. The steering committee of the U.N. General Assembly decided Friday not to include in the assembly's agenda a proposal by 15 mainly African and Caribbean countries for Taiwan membership. It was the sixth consecutive year China defeated such a proposal.

Lesotho government denies coup rumours

MASERU (AFP) — The Lesotho government Saturday moved to quell rumours it had been ousted during a revolt by junior army officers as calm returned to the streets of the capital. Foreign Minister Tom Thabane told AFP the government was in control of the mountain kingdom, and that government ministers had held a meeting here Saturday morning. Thabane spoke after Lesotho's army chief, Lieutenant General Makhulu Mosikhe, and other senior officers were rounded up by disgruntled junior officers and locked in jail Friday afternoon. The mutiny and resignations sparked rumours that a coup was underway, the junior officers adding to the speculation by claiming they had put Prime Minister Puthu Mothobi under house arrest. The junior officers told AFP late Friday they were not staging a mutiny or a coup but merely trying to create a non-partisan defence force by ridding the army of a top structure loyal to the ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD).

Thousands in German trade union protest

DORTMUND (R) — Tens of thousands of people attended trade union rallies in cities around Germany Saturday to protest against the government's record ahead of the Sept. 27 general election. While not overtly urging voters to oust Chancellor Helmut Kohl's centre-right government, German Trade Union Federation chief Dieter Schulte sided with key opposition policies such as a joint union-employer initiative to create jobs. "We want a change of direction at last," Schulte told a crowd of 15,000 in the Ruhr valley town of Dortmund, where the main rally was held. Demonstrators earlier marched through the town with banners emblazoned with demands such as "Jobs, not social decay." Police said a further 15,000 people attended a union rally in the northern town of Hanover, power base of Kohl's SPD challenger Gerhard Schröder. Several thousand also turned up or were expected in Berlin, Nuremberg and the eastern city of Schwerin.

ETA political wing urges peace

ESTELLA (AFP) — Herri Batasuna, the separatist political wing of the armed Basque ETA militants, Saturday for the first time joined moderate nationalist parties in urging a peaceful solution to the 19-year-old conflict. ETA's political arm, the ruling Basque Nationalist party and the left-wing Euzko Abertzaskuntza released a joint declaration calling for "multilateral discussions without insurmountable conditions" between the two sides.

Five policemen killed in Caucasus attack

MOSCOW (AP) — Five policemen were killed Saturday in a pre-dawn attack on a police checkpoint in the violence-ridden Caucasus region of Russia, the Interior Ministry said. One attacker was killed and another wounded. The policemen were manning a joint post on the border of Ingushetia and Northern Ossetia, two Russian republics that fought a short but bloody war in 1992. Breakaway Chechnya is nearby. The checkpoint was attacked by unidentified assailants armed with rifles and a grenade-launcher, a duty officer at the Interior Ministry said. The ITAR-TASS news agency said there were six attackers, and that they disarmed the policemen and took them away from the checkpoint before shooting them.

Congo talks stall, more troops promised

ADDIS ABABA (R) — African defence ministers failed Saturday to agree terms for a ceasefire in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Zimbabwe said more troops may be sent to support the Kinshasa government against rebels.

Uganda and Rwanda, who have backed the rebels fighting to topple President Laurent Kabila, walked out of talks at the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) headquarters in Ethiopia early Saturday.

"We could not agree on the principles of a ceasefire," Rwanda's delegate told Reuters.

The delegate said the talks on a ceasefire, agreed in principle at a peace summit in Zimbabwe last week, broke down over whether Congolese rebels should attend. Congo's delegation and representatives from Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia — which are providing military support to Kabila

— had opposed this.

"We decided it would be a futile exercise. You cannot negotiate a ceasefire until you have identified all the belligerents and have invited them to talks," the Rwandan delegate said.

Zimbabwe Defence Minister Mosen Mubvumba said southern African states might consider sending more troops to reinforce Kabila's forces and accused Rwanda and Uganda of stalling peace efforts "to prepare for war."

Mabuchi, speaking after the failure of the Addis Ababa talks, told Reuters that efforts to find a peaceful solution would continue.

"If the SADC [Southern African Development Community] heads of state see there is no prospect of peace, they may consider adding additional manpower," Mabuchi told Reuters.

SADC heads of state are meeting in Mauritius this weekend for an annual sum-

mit at which the Congo crisis is expected to figure prominently.

Uganda has acknowledged that it has troops inside Congo and holds several airports in the east of the vast country, but Rwanda denies that it has any troops on Congolese soil.

Referring to Uganda and Rwanda, Mabuchi said: "They want to delay the peace talks, to give themselves time to prepare for war. They don't want peace in that region." Mabuchi said all states at the Ethiopia meeting, grouping defence ministers and senior military officials from seven states, had agreed to a draft peace plan after Rwanda and Uganda left the meeting, but he would not divulge details of the plan.

The talks were mediated by OAU Secretary General Salim Ahmed Salim, the U.N. Secretary General's representative to the Great Lakes region Berhanu Dinka, and officials from neutral Zambia. Zambian Defence Minister

Chitalu Sampa said the meeting had drawn up recommendations for implementing a truce but the delegates could not agree on the final terms.

Sampa confirmed that the main stumbling block was the issue of a rebel seat at the negotiating table.

"We have made recommendations for a ceasefire for our heads of state to consider," Sampa told Reuters.

"What we explained at the meeting was that after the heads of state have looked into the recommendations, then at a particular time, the rebels would be invited. This was what our colleagues [from Uganda, Rwanda] did not agree with," he said.

The head of the Congo delegation, Joseph Kabila, gave only a brief comment to reporters after the failed meeting.

"Everybody who wants peace is disappointed," said Kabila, the president's son and Congo's army chief of staff.

Thousands of Kosovo refugees flee new fighting

PRISTINA (AP) — Heavy fighting in northwestern Kosovo drove thousands of ethnic Albanians from their villages Saturday, days after their cautious return, ethnic Albanian sources said.

A separate refugee crisis was developing on Kosovo's border with Montenegro — Serbia's smaller partner in what's left of Yugoslavia — after an estimated 3,000 refugees were refused entry Friday by the small cash-strapped republic. Ethnic Albanians pleaded for emergency aid for them.

The refugee drama comes with international officials desperately trying to help those driven into the open by the six-month conflict before winter arrives.

There was no sign of a letup Saturday in the offensive by Serb security forces, who are trying to crush the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army efforts to win independence for the Serbian province, which is populated largely by ethnic Albanians.

About 12,000 people fled their homes late Friday and early Saturday in the Drenica region, according to the ethnic Albanian-run Kosovo Information Centre.

Most had returned only days earlier to homes in the area around Razalla, about 30 kilometres northwest of the provincial capital, Pristina, hoping that they would not be driven out again, spokesman Himil Zogjani said.

"Refugees are fleeing but they don't know where to go," he said.

The ethnic Albanian centre said fighting was "very heavy" Saturday in the Drenica area, one of the last remaining KLA

strongholds. It said three ethnic Albanians, two of them children, had been killed there Friday and Saturday.

The pro-Serb Media Centre had no immediate reports of fighting or refugee movements Saturday.

To the west of Decani, a new refugee problem developed on the Montenegrin border following the Montenegrin government's decision Friday to halt the influx of refugees. More than 40,000 Kosovo refugees are already in Montenegro.

Zogjani said 3,000 refugees were camped in the mountains on the border, effectively trapped near the village of Bogajice, after they were turned back.

"We appeal for some help for them as they have no food or water or transportation," he said.

Meanwhile, Serb police used loudspeakers Saturday to urge an estimated 7,000 refugees to leave the meadow where they were camped in Istic, 75 kilometres southwest of Pristina.

"Go home, the police and army won't harm you," they said in Albanian.

Police were escorting those who declined to leave. "I'd like most of all to go to my home but I don't know what's waiting there for me," said Mista Sejdia, a 70-year-old refugee who said he's been on the run for more than three months.

Convoys of humanitarian aid trucks loaded with food, plastic sheets, medical supplies and clothing were headed Saturday for Istic. Humanitarian workers said the meagre supplies will help some but aren't nearly enough for all.

Russian officials differ on death of sailor

MOSCOW (AFP) — The Russian navy and defence ministry gave conflicting accounts Saturday of how a teenage sailor who killed at least eight of his comrades died.

The navy said police shot the sailor dead. The ministry said he committed suicide.

The navy, reported by Interfax earlier Saturday, said police stormed the sailor's barricaded compartment on a submarine off the coast of Murmansk shortly after midnight.

A few hours later the defence ministry, also quoted by Interfax, said the youth committed suicide after killing eight of his comrades — as opposed to nine reported earlier. The ministry gave no further details.

According to the navy,

Alexander Kuzminykh, 19, stole an automatic rifle early Friday from a guard he battered to death and then shot eight other men dead after a brawl broke out on a nuclear submarine docked at the Skalisty naval base.

Kuzminykh later barricaded himself into a compartment and threatened to kill himself. Eight hours later, special police units were called aboard the Shark-class submarine where officers spent the day trying to persuade Kuzminykh to give himself up.

Efforts to end the stand-off peacefully failed, even after Kuzminykh's mother and brother arrived from St. Petersburg to try to convince him to surrender. Naval psychologists and a local priest

also sought to persuade him, according to ITAR-TASS.

Interfax earlier reported that the psychologists had deemed Kuzminykh's mental state to be "incompetent."

Naval officers, however, described the seaman as "responsible, decisively focused, and well acquainted with the ship's mechanisms." Alexander Zdanovich, public relations director for the Federal Security Service, said due to the importance of the vessel and the fact that torpedoes were located in Kuzminykh's compartment, law enforcement agents would not use their weapons unless all alternative means to apprehend him failed.

Naval employees told Interfax there was no way Kuzminykh would have been

able to blow up the ship, as the electricity supply to his compartment had been cut off as soon as he entered it.

Zdanovich later told the ITAR-TASS news agency that Kuzminykh was killed because "all other possibilities had been exhausted."

Zdanovich added the case had been handed over to the public prosecutor.

Earlier, the defence ministry said the submarine was not equipped with nuclear weapons.

Suicide is not uncommon among young conscripts in the Russian military, where new recruits face bullying and hardship. However, naval commanders were quick to stress this was not the case with Kuzminykh.

Protests as Chile marks Pinochet's 1973 coup

SANTIAGO (R) — Demonstrators clashed with police Friday on the 25th anniversary of Chile's 1973 military coup, the last time the date of the overthrow will be a national holiday.

Police fired tear gas at leftist sympathisers, headed by Communist Party leader Gladys Marin, as the protesters attempted to march through the city centre and, against government orders, pass by the La Moneda presidential palace.

Some demonstrators, wearing hoods and waving red flags, threw Molotov cocktails and rocks at police

vehicles. Others broke windows at the Brazilian embassy and spray painted its walls.

Police in bullet-proof vests and helmets diverted traffic in downtown Santiago and cordoned off major streets and the presidential palace with metal barricades.

The demonstrators aimed to finish their march at the General Cemetery, the burial ground of former Socialist President Salvador Allende, who was toppled in the bloody Sept. 11, 1973, coup.

The coup resulted in Allende's death

inside La Moneda and a 17-year dictatorship led by Gen. Augusto Pinochet. During his rule, 3,197 people were either killed or disappeared, 52,000 were sent into exile and thousands more were tortured.

In a ceremony in his honour later in the evening, Pinochet in a feeble and slurred speech told supporters: "The lapse since Sept. 11, 1973 — a quarter of a century — is a significant period for a nation... We [must] contemplate the road we have come down. We owe our thanks to those who defended our liberty."

After the initial confrontation with police Friday, demonstrators later clashed with them again in the middle-class neighbourhood of Independencia on their way to the cemetery.

Demonstrators broke windows and looted a shop near the former Mapocho train station, vandalised a bank's automatic teller machine and flamed a bonfire in the street with chairs and cardboard.

Authorities brought in water canons, mounted police and more tear gas. Deputy Interior Minister Belisario

Velasco told reporters 67 people were arrested and eight police officers and six civilians were injured.

But local media later said Velasco revised the number of detained to about 120 people.

Last month, in a move supported by Pinochet — an 82-year-old former army commander-in-chief and now lifetime senator — the senate unanimously approved a bill to abolish the Sept. 11 holiday and replace it with "National Unity Day" on the first Monday of September beginning in 1999.

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World News

Robinson ends Tibet trip amid allegations of prison brutality

SHANGHAI (AFP) — U.N. human rights chief Mary Robinson ended a trip to Tibet Saturday as London-based rights group published allegations of brutal treatment of the region's political prisoners.

Robinson flew to Shanghai from Lhasa as the Tibet Information Network (TIN) published a "commentary" from an unnamed Tibetan containing reports of torture, forced labour and killings of political prisoners in Tibetan jails.

"Political suppression and punishment take the form of forcing the political prisoners to say or do things against their will and conscience, such as having to sing Chinese patriotic songs and shout pro-China slogans," said the commentary, part of an occasional series of personal views published by TIN.

"When the political prisoners resolutely resisted such impositions, armed police were sent in to beat them up most viciously.... As a result of these beatings [one monk] died," it said.

TIN said other reports confirmed the commentator's story.

Robinson's spokesman, Jose Diaz, told AFP that Chinese officials had declined to answer her questions on the whereabouts of the child designated by Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, as the Panchen Lama, and turned down her request for a meeting with a prominent Tibetan monk.

"She asked the authorities about the whereabouts of the Panchen Lama and they said they could not disclose it for reasons of his own protection," Diaz said.

"She highlighted that there is international interest over his whereabouts," he said.

Diaz said Robinson discussed with local educational leaders and teachers the possibility of incorporating human rights into the school curriculum and underlined the link between individual and collective rights.

Sources said Robinson would not visit a prison nor hold any unscheduled meetings for fear of violent reprisals after her departure from the Himalayan region.

The TIN commentary said that so far "there has not been a single effective visit by a foreign delegation" to a Tibetan prison, but called on visitors to bring their own interpreters and request access to the hospital, eating area, dormitories, work sites and classrooms.

"I regard it as extremely important for visiting delegates to arrange one-to-one interviews with individual prisoners in order to find out their feelings and thoughts in an environment where there is freedom of speech," the author of the report said.

Overseas watchdog groups reported that prison authorities retaliated violently against prisoners who spoke to members of the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which visited Lhasa's Drapchi prison last year. Robinson's landmark mission to China has already attracted criticism from dissidents because she has had no direct contact with them.



BOYCOTT AGAINST MULTI-NATIONAL CORPORATIONS: Supporters of right-wing groups in the ruling Hindu nationalist government take a pledge, during a demonstration Saturday in New Delhi in front of a statue of Shivaji, a 17th-century Hindu ruler, to boycott multi-national corporations such as Pepsi and Coca-Cola. The demonstrators, who are against free trade reforms, held a protest march to the parliament (AFP photo)

Flood waters start receding around Dhaka

DHAKA (AFP) — Flood waters besieging Dhaka started to recede Saturday, lowering the threat to a dyke protecting 600,000 residents in three suburbs of the capital.

"Water in and around Dhaka has started receding as the Buriganga and Turag rivers are going down," an expert from the Flood Warning Centre told AFP.

But the official said water levels on the two rivers remained above danger levels, while a third river, the Shitalakha, was "static."

The expert said swollen rivers threatening Dhaka had started draining into the Bay of Bengal, where unusually high tides had earlier prevented adequate drainage and compounded the

century's worst floods in Bangladesh.

A Water Development Board spokesman said water around the key dyke guarding the three Dhaka suburbs receded marginally Saturday, "which is very encouraging."

While four rivers ringing the city were still dangerously high, swollen rivers upstream continued to recede Saturday, officials said. Soldiers, engineers and thousands of residents remained alert with sandbags to plug possible new breaches in the 32-kilometre dyke, witnesses said.

The crowded city's four main roads were still submerged. "Several areas in Dhaka are now completely cut off," an official from the anti-flood department said.

Fears of a fuel crisis in Dhaka were high with two major depots in the suburbs in waist-deep water. Officials said they were only supplying cooking oil and diesel.

At least 800 people have died and a quarter of the country's 120 million people have been made homeless since July, when the floods first struck and crippled industrial production and agriculture.

Floods have also inundated the capital's diplomatic quarter, prompting an evacuation of non-essential personnel from the British mission Friday. Two U.S. military C-130 aircraft meanwhile arrived here Saturday to stage an exercise with the Bangladesh military and help relief operations.

A United Nations disaster management agency earlier this week warned that up to 20 million Bangladeshis could die without urgent international help to prevent food shortages and epidemics of water-borne diseases.

The World Food Programme Friday announced that it would grant \$76 million in its largest emergency aid package to Bangladesh, which has appealed for 1.38 million tonnes of food and \$879 million.

Britain has offered \$36 million while the International Monetary Fund has granted an emergency loan of \$98 million. Several other countries and multilateral agencies have also offered contributions.

Cambodian opposition cancels rally after further street clashes

PHNOM PENH (AP) — Rival party supporters fought street battles Saturday in a sixth day of unrest as strongman Hun Sen brought some 5,000 armed

partisans into the capital, staging a massive show of force to crush calls for his ouster.

Ten gunshots were fired after about 100 Hun Sen partisans became separated from their comrades and were hit by a hail of stones thrown by opposition backers, the only time Saturday the sides confronted each other in equal numbers.

At least three people were badly hurt — two Hun Sen backers and a bystander. One was struck by two bullets in the leg. Two people were badly beaten in an earlier clash, but there were no reports of new deaths to add to the four since Monday.

The opposition supporters, who had otherwise tried to avoid contact as Hun Sen's men hunted them through the city, chased and attacked them with their own clubs, dropped in panicked flight. Shots were fired wildly by Hun Sen's men in the melee.

Accusing Hun Sen of escalating tensions for a "Pol Pot-style massacre," the opposition called off a peaceful mass rally planned for Sunday.

"The future of the country is really the most serious... since Pol Pot," opposition leader Prince Norodom Ranariddh said.

The references to the dead Khmer Rouge leader — whose reign of terror caused the deaths of as many as two million people in the 1970s — follow the worst week of violence since Hun Sen deposed Ranariddh as co-premier in a coup last year.

King Norodom Sihanouk and the army's top general pressured opposition leaders Friday to accept Hun Sen's victory in parliamentary elections July 26. But they say he won by massive fraud and threaten to boycott the National Assembly, preventing a new government from forming.

Ranariddh said he would see the king, his father, Wednesday and defied threats of arrest, saying all his party's members of parliament would go to jail with him.

"With the arrest of Ranariddh, there will be bloodshed," the prince said. "It is my duty to end the bloodshed, violence, but still respect the will of the people."

Hun Sen assembled supporters of his Cambodian People's Party from strongholds in the

Phnom Penh region. They rolled through the capital in convoys of trucks, occasionally joined by truckloads of troops.

Organisers threatened to double the mob Sunday to crush the opposition rally. Orders were overheard to bring in more men from the provinces and to offer each 10 kilograms of rice.

One club-wielding Hun Sen supporter, Prak Sokhan, 43, said: "We want to see all demonstrations stopped." They then went out hunting their rivals.

Saturday morning, 3,000 marched toward the opposition rallying point near the U.S. Embassy and Ranariddh's home. They chanted for the arrests of Ranariddh and his ally, Sam Rainsy, calling them "traitors." Riot police and soldiers, who used guns, clubs and water cannon against demonstrators including Buddhist monks until Hun Sen shifted Friday to plainclothes mobs, allowed them to gather with clubs, chains, pipes, slingshots and concealed guns.

About 200 opposition supporters shouted insults as the pro-Hun Sen crowd came into view, then threw stones and scattered.

India should not sign CTBT — party chief

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India should not sign a global test ban treaty despite international flak over its May nuclear tests, the head of the ruling Hindu nationalist party said Saturday.

Kushabhau Thakre, president of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party), said the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) could not be accepted "in its present form."

"There cannot be any discrimination between countries having the nuclear weapon and

those not having it," he was quoted as saying in the eastern city of Bhubaneswar by the Press Trust of India (PTI).

It was the first public statement by a Hindu nationalist leader that India was not moving towards signing the CTBT in the wake of its widely-condemned nuclear tests.

Thursday, the top advisor to Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said the government was seeking to formalise its moratorium on nuclear testing, but skirted the question of signing the CTBT.

"We want to convert our moratorium into a de jure obligation," Rajesh Mishra told foreign reporters in New Delhi.

India announced the moratorium after conducting a series of nuclear tests in May but has since come under intense global pressure to sign the CTBT.

Referring to ongoing talks with the United States over CTBT, Mishra said "a lot of ground" had been covered but added that the two sides were still some way from reaching an agreement.

Malaysia's Anwar takes his campaign on the road

CHEROK TOK KUN (AP) — Malaysia's sacked deputy prime minister went to his rural hometown Saturday to defend himself against sexual misconduct allegations and launch his nationwide political reform campaign.

Prime Minister Mahathir Muhammad sacked Anwar Ibrahim as his deputy and finance minister on Sept. 2, saying he was immoral and unfit to lead his South East Asian nation.

Police are investigating eight criminal charges against him and say he could face arrest.

Anwar has vehemently denied all allegations, saying they were crafted by his former mentor to undermine his growing popularity and challenge to Mahathir's 17-year rule.

He called on some 5,000 supporters Saturday who had travelled for miles to dismiss the allegations and stand by him.

"I'm back in Penang. I haven't forgotten my roots," Anwar shouted from a raised platform outside his father's modest, two-story house in the northwestern state of Penang. "I'm launching the reform movement here." He said he would travel the nation to

rehabilitate himself and be reinstated to the ruling United Malaysia.

National Organisation, from which he was expelled last week. He also plans to spell out his government reform platform, which calls for more democratic freedoms and government transparency.

"The newspapers have vilified me," Anwar said. "My name has been smeared on national television, but the more they smear me, the stronger the support." The rally was attended by several UMNO division chiefs, one who launched a petition drive calling on Mahathir to reinstate Anwar into the party that has dominated Malaysian politics since independence from Britain in 1957.

Mazlan Saad, a spokesman for a non-governmental organisation, the Malaysian Reformist Organisation, said his group had always taken on social causes and shied away from politics.

But with the Anwar sacking, MRO would now throw its weight behind Anwar.

"The action against Anwar is a culmination of what's rotten in the government," Mazlan said. "Anwar symbolises the future of the country. The one

person that really destabilises Malaysia is Mahathir."

Though political rallies are illegal in Malaysia without a police permit, no police were seen at the house or along the winding dirt road leading to the compound.

"Mahathir is terrified of being toppled," said Syed Abdul Halib, 26, who rode his motorcycle from a neighbouring town to listen to Anwar's speech. "If Mahathir doesn't like Anwar, just say so, but don't fabricate lies about him." Later Saturday night, Anwar was scheduled to hold another rally in Mahathir's hometown and power base, Alor Setar.

Anwar, 51, appears to be courting conservative Muslims often at odds with Mahathir's secular rule.

Friday, he attended prayers at a mosque at Kampong Baru, traditionally a gathering place for Islamic scholars to debate religious policy and push for more Islamic influence over the government.

Friday night, Anwar visited well-known Islamic scholar Harun Din, banned from weekly televised religious shows as his views were seen by the government as too extreme.

Congress members urge solution to E. Timor status

WASHINGTON (AFP) — More than 100 members of the U.S. Congress have signed separate letters to presidents Bill Clinton and B.J. Habibie of Indonesia calling for a clarification of the status of East Timor.

Habibie's predecessor Suharto in 1975 ordered the invasion of the former Portuguese colony, and its annexation the following year.

Critics have accused the Indonesian military, which has a pervasive presence in East Timor, of serious violations of human rights. They have called for a troops withdrawal as a prerequisite to peace there.

The letters, mailed Friday, call for the immediate release of all East Timor political prisoners, including independence leader Xanana Gusmao.

The letter to Clinton urges the U.S. pres-

ident "at this crucial juncture in Indonesian history" to "call on the Indonesian government to honour past resolutions enacted by the United Nations."

The letter notes that the 1975 invasion, which they say killed 200,000 East Timorese, "was carried out with American weaponry and diplomatic support."

The letter to Habibie states that the signatories "believe the time is ripe for the new Indonesian government to enter into a serious dialogue with the people of East Timor, including Bishop Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo."

U.S. legislators support measures advocated by Belo, such as a reduction of Indonesian soldiers, as well as freedom of speech and of assembly for East Timor residents.

"There is a great historical opportunity to achieve a just and conciliatory settlement on East Timor" through the "good offices of the United Nations, based on the freely expressed will of the people of East Timor," the letter read.

The signatories sidestepped any controversy by describing the East Timor situation as "tragic and complex," and not affixing direct blame.

The letter was signed by 101 members of congress belonging to both the Democratic and Republican parties.

Habibie pledged a "gradual" troop withdrawal in a meeting with the East Timorese bishop in June, shortly after he replaced Suharto.

However after a highly-publicised withdrawal of 1,000 troops in July and August critics say more troops are pouring in.

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Welcomed moves

AHMAD OBEIDAT and Taher Masri, who were yesterday appointed to the 13th Senate will not be able to overturn Jordan's peace treaty with Israel even if they wished to. Although the two former prime ministers are not opposed to peace per se, they like many Jordanians, have little faith that the Israeli establishment is willing to meet the Arabs half-way and give Palestinians their rights.

That argument, which is as true today as it was in the aftermath of the signing of the peace treaty in 1994, still holds — and Jordanians need not be penalised for their stand on that.

That is the essence of the meaning of the Royal Decree that yesterday instated the two former prime ministers where they belong, as counsels to the King and guardians of the Constitution.

The new spirit ushered in by the ongoing conversations HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, recently started were boosted yesterday by the appointment of Obeidat and Masri. By rehabilitating the two outspoken politicians, and also dismissing the heavy-handed chief of the press department, the leadership is demonstrating its genuine intent towards openness and the creation of a broader consensus. Suspensions are dissipating, dialogue and exchange take their place.

Both Obeidat and Masri will certainly contribute to enriching the ongoing debate that the Regent wished to start. They and their colleagues at the Senate, all able and trusted men of the King, will hopefully build on the spirit the Regent introduced and contribute to the ongoing dialogue among all sectors of society. With the openness that the Tarawneh government promises to deal with matters of urgency to Jordanians, embodied in the appointment of a liberal-minded director of the press, the stage is finally set for a national debate through which every Jordanian will be able to say what is on his or her mind.

This of course should be the beginning of a national soul-searching process that would advance in a new political and social culture modelled on the vision of the leadership of a Jordan that is a beacon of enlightenment in a troubled region.

A healthy vision is discerned. The new spirit deserves support.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Ahmad Mesleh said it is necessary for all parties in the peace process — the Palestinian National Authority, Israel and the United States — to reach a breakthrough. American President Bill Clinton wants to improve his image after a series of crises, starting with the fiasco with the White House intern Monica Lewinsky, Iraq, Kosovo and finally the twin bombing of the American embassies in Dar Es Salaam and Nairobi and the following American retaliation. The United States will not risk giving up its role of sponsoring the peace process and lose its strategic influence in the region as well as its reputation, said the writer. The PNA and Israel are not in a better position, said the writer. The PNA and Israel are in the same boat, and both sides understand the need for peace among their peoples, he added.

Al Dustour discussed in its editorial the recent developments in the Iraq/U.N. saga. The plight of the Iraqi people will continue until the stand-off is resolved, said the paper. The Security Council decided to suspend regular review of the sanctions regime, a move which has left Baghdad with no mechanism to have them lifted. The United Nations' decision came months after Iraq decided to stop cooperating with UNSCOM and its chief inspector, Richard Butler, who refused to certify that Iraq had destroyed its banned weapons, added the Arabic daily. The paper charged that absence of Arab influence and the division in the Arab World, will only serve to further complicate the crisis. The paper charged that the absence of channels of communications between the parties of the conflict will not help solve the problem and thus the crisis will continue.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

A government with open options

Dr. Fahed Fanek

THE NEW government of Dr. Fayez Tarawneh has found a lot of issues waiting to be resolved one way or another. The issues begin with filling the vacancies left after the formation of the government, and ends by formulating a coherent plan to get out of the current economic recession. They include policies and positions towards water, the economic adjustment programme, pending World Bank loans, the re-structuring of certain sectors such as health, water, and energy, and other important but less prominent questions.

The initial position of the government so far is that everything is possible and all options are open. Everything will be studied carefully in the light of present circumstances and as part and parcel of an overall plan, which the government will come up with and try to make it work.

Such an initial attitude is quite appropriate for a new government, which of course has the right to reconsider anything. The new government is not required or expected to defend mistakes committed by its predecessors. Nor should a new government commit itself to controversial decisions or questionable policies previously adopted, if there are better and

more feasible alternatives.

However, the grace period for studies and reviews should not be long. People should be able to identify actual policies and objectives of the new government before the lapsing of the traditional one-hundred-days-of-new-governments homonym. We need a government whose actions are predictable and don't amount to surprises. Business circles don't like to be taken by surprise. Unpredictable movements are called uncertainty, and this is not the right climate for investment and growth.

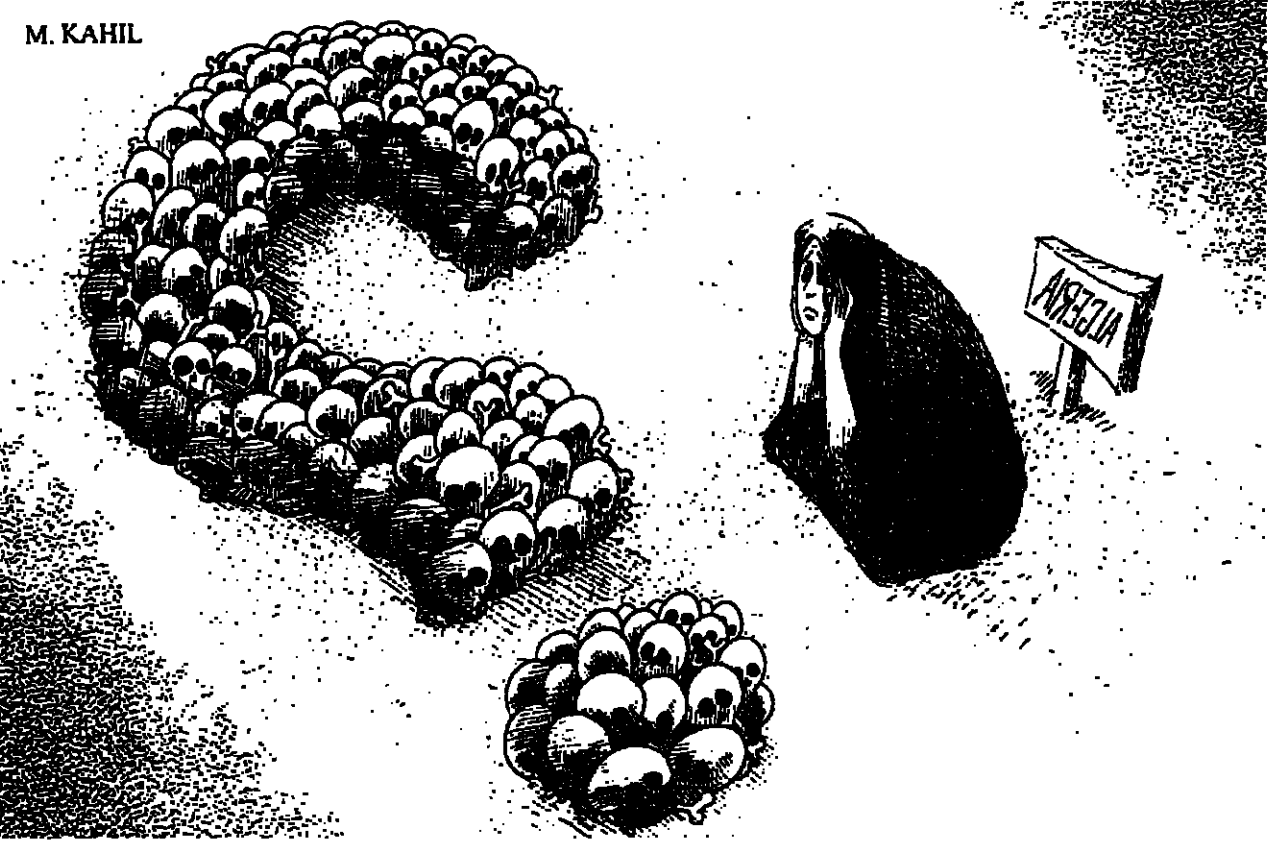
It is not certain that the policy statement — which the government will make to the Parliament before the 19th of this month — will be sufficient for our purposes. The statement will be written in such a way as to please and satisfy the deputies, and to encourage them to give a vote of confidence and to make no-confidence voting more difficult.

After winning a comfortable vote of confidence, the prime minister and his economic and political teams will have to announce their identity and intentions. They have every right to conduct heated dialogues among themselves first, and then

between them and civil society institutions, such as political parties, professional associations, labour unions, and the press. They can consult with everyone, but they must finally make up their own minds and bear the full responsibility for their actions.

Among the economic issues that were almost closed, but are now reopened for consideration are: the privatisation agenda, the concept of introducing a strategic partner for major privatisation projects, economic re-structuring, the price of bread, World Bank loans, setting priorities for public expenditure, water projects, control of labour market, alleviating poverty and tackling unemployment, etc.

It is not worthwhile in this respect to show optimism or pessimism. It is not useful to just wait and see, everyone should contribute in the decision-making process by expressing ideas or making demands. In particular, the private sector should tell the government in specific terms what it expects from it. The government in turn should tell the private sector, also in specific terms, what it expects from business circles.



Bones of contention

Can we ever turn our backs on the skeletons in our closets? Bill Clinton would say no. But, as Ben Elton asks, should our private parts be judged by present standards?

I HAVE got this dialogue running through my head. It takes place 100 years from now, between a history teacher and an eager student. Class 4B are studying the late 1990s, as remote to them as the last days of Queen Victoria are to us, and the eager student is puzzled. "Have I understood you right, sir?" he says. "The president of the United States, the most powerful man on Earth, had to put the world on hold in order to go on television and admit having non-ejaculatory oral sex in the Oval Office with a lady other than his wife?"

The teacher answers with a weary shrug. Making sense of this period of history is no simple task: it makes the Schleswig-Holstein question look like an open and shut case. "Yes, that's right," says the teacher. "Although the president tried to claim that the oral sex, which he did not mention specifically, was not really a sexual act, because, as he'd already stated, he never had sexual relations with the woman."

The eager student still doesn't get it. "But surely in a free society presidential blow jobs, no matter how unedifying they might be, are a matter for the president, the first lady, and the third party of the blowing part?"

"You're not listening," snaps the teacher, losing patience. "The president lied. Sex wasn't the issue: it was the fact that he had lied about it. It was a matter of character."

The student is not to be so easily bullied. He's one of those clever types who insists on thinking things through, despite the best efforts of the national curriculum to stop him. "Well, of course he lied, sir. If you'd been unfaithful to Mrs. Scruttock and somebody asked you about it, what would you say?"

"Don't be impertinent, boy." "You'd deny it. Of course you would, sir. You certainly wouldn't say: 'Oh gosh, yes, I definitely had sexual relations with a woman other than Mrs. Scruttock, and oh, by the way, I may have ejaculated onto her dress as well.' It's insane, sir. Nobody should ever have asked the question in the first place."

And then once more, Mr. Scruttock has to explain, as he does every year to sniggering fourth-formers, that the independent prosecutor had been justified in asking such puerile questions of the president because they were relevant to the Paula Jones sexual harassment case.

"And all this happened," the teacher adds, "just weeks before the third world war started in the Gulf."

Whichever way you look at it, the current personal travails of the Clinton presidency are going to get some giggles in the history classes of the future. Could the people of the late 20th century really have been that puerile? Certainly, there were sex scandals before Clinton — Parnell or the abdication crisis, for instance — but in those cases the outrage was based on activities that genuinely transgressed the prevailing morality.

Clinton's "offences" may not be very edifying, but they are hardly rare. If you watch

Oprah, you'd think everybody was at it. In rock stars it seems to be considered a job requirement. How, then, did it come to pass that the richest, most technologically sophisticated country in the world risked tearing itself apart by agonising over the fine details of oral sex?

President Clinton must be asking himself the same question. No other leader in history ever had to put up with the things he has to put up with. Imagine Caligula going before the senate in a similar damage-control exercise: "Yes, I introduced my private parts into the horse, but the horse did not reach orgasm, hence I deny bestiality. And don't wave that stained saddle at me, sir."

Who knows, the dead may yet have their personal lives reassessed by the courts of today, for modern political morality is retrospective. We live in an age so sure of its moral worth that it seeks to impose its values not only on what happens today, but on future activities that were long thought dead and buried. All Clinton's orgasms are coming back to haunt him. It must be a scary time to have your head above the parapet (or in the Oval Office, as Clinton did).

Social and political sensibilities are changing at such a pace that actions that seemed entirely acceptable only a few years ago are now highly questionable, perhaps even criminal. How many well-meaning teachers are quaking at the memory of suntan lotion slapped onto the shoulders of peeling children?

A year or so ago I read the extraordinary story of a U.S. general named Joe Ralston. He was highly respected and tipped to become the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff. America's highest-ranking soldier. However, his nomination was never formally considered because he became caught up in a sex scandal. Not a sex scandal as we used to think of one, not Caligula-style; nothing very juicy at all, in fact. All that had happened was that 15 years earlier, while separated from his wife, Ralston had had an affair. Adultery, no matter how technical, is a dismissible offence in the U.S. army, and so when it all came out, America lost arguably its best officer.

In the past, Ralston's "offence" would almost certainly have been swept under the carpet, but the past is changing so quickly that we hardly recognise it any more, and Joe Ralston's career was doomed. His problem was that his case ran concurrently with a huge row concerning a female air-force pilot named Kelly Flynn, who had been dismissed for conduct unbecoming, conduct that included adultery. In the ideological sex war that ensued, Ralston and Flynn's past lives became the stuff of modern power play.

I don't think anyone could have imagined how quickly this sexual McCarthyism would gain pace. Washington currently resembles a scene from The Crucible, with accusation and paranoia running rife. The Ralston and Flynn cases are now utterly dwarfed by the grotesque spectacle of the president facing the prospect of impeachment for lying about an uncommitted blow job, followed by a sly hand-shandy. Nobody likes it, but it's happening. It is pointless for us all to throw our

hands in the air exclaiming that if Kennedy or Lloyd George had had to explain every sexual affair they ever had, they would have had no time at all for affairs of state (it's a wonder that they had time, anyway). Kennedy and Lloyd George did not live in such prurient times. In their day, a person's private life was only public if it transgressed the law.

Of course, as my imaginary history teacher pointed out, Clinton's current sexual travails do hover on the edge of legality. They stem from the Paula Jones sexual harassment case. Sexual harassment is a serious matter. I doubt anyone would argue that it is anything other than a terrible thing millions of women have had to suffer for too long. None the less, that does not mean that every unpleasant and inelegant pass is harassment — except, of course, it can be if you want it to. It depends on your point of view.

As far as I can make out, the circumstances of the Paula Jones case were that, late one night, Ms. Jones accepted an invitation to the hotel room of the then governor of Arkansas. He proffered his penis, which she declined to touch. She then retreated, and there the matter rested for six years.

Now, I know women who would think it something of a hoot to have the president's tackle flashed at them. They would dine out on it and amuse their friends in pubs, saying: "Did I ever tell you about the distinguishing features I once saw on the president's tackle?" Other women, of course, would be highly offended and very possibly intimidated by the same incident. But was it harassment? It would seem to depend entirely on your politics. Clinton is a Democrat, so most Democrats say no, it wasn't. However, if the flasher had been a Republican, then those same Democrats would almost certainly have been unable to resist saying, yes, it was — after all, they did in the Clarence Thomas case.

Whatever your beliefs, Clinton's past has become his present, and he and we must live with it. All past is now the present. Nations agonise about whether to apologise (and pay) for the sins of their forebears. At university they inquire whether Shakespeare was a sexist and if Churchill can be called a racist. Personally, I think a degree of revisionism is important and healthy. For example, I think it is right for the world to try to redress (or at least acknowledge) the wrongs done to indigenous peoples during the course of European colonialism. And much as I admire Churchill, I can see that, clearly, his attitude to race informed his world view in a manner that we no longer agree with. But it is a dangerous game to play, particularly when applied to personal lives. If our private past is to be endlessly rejuggled in the context of an evolving present, then it will be a brave man or woman who is prepared to offer up their life to scrutiny in exchange for the cares of office. Anyone who ever wore a pair of sawn-off baron baggies or a Bowler-print kippie knows that we all have something of which to be ashamed.

— The Sunday Times

Family history

Editor's note: This is the first part of a trilogy on the 'real history of the human race.' Part two will appear next week

By Gwynne Dyer

"I'VE GIVEN an introductory lecture on human evolution every year since 1970," remarked Leslie Aiello, professor of biological anthropology at University College, London, "and I've never given the same lecture twice." But the avalanche of new data and new ideas is making it possible, at last, to write a real history of the human race — or perhaps a 'meta-history,' because it's a bigger project than that.

It's not the historians who are doing the work, for they don't have the necessary tools. It's the anthropologists, the geneticists, and the linguists — even the primatologists — who are figuring out what really happened. And it's all quite different from what we believed even ten years ago.

In the 1980s, for example, it was still thought that we were descended from primitive humans who migrated out of Africa between one and two million years ago, settled all over Eurasia (the Neanderthals in Europe, Peking Man in East Asia, Java Man further south), and there evolved into the various races of humanity. Now it is all but certain that we are a much more closely knit species who emerged in Africa about 200,000 years ago, and moved out into the rest of the world as recently as 100,000 years ago.

It turns out that DNA differences among different groups of Africans — and hence the length of time since they ceased to belong to the same inter-marrying tribe — are far greater than between all other human beings. Even Scots and Japanese are closer to each other genetically than African groups living a couple of hundred kilometres apart, because their ancestors all left Africa and lost touch with one another only 100,000 years ago.

The so-called 'races' of mankind, in other words, are only recent local variations of a common African stock. Indeed, the 90 per cent of the human race whose more recent roots are non-African are a rather inbred lot, since they are descended from a very small number of ancestors — perhaps only a few thousand — who crossed the Sinai peninsula to populate Europe, Asia, Oceania and the Americas. (The quickest way to re-diversify the human gene pool would be for everybody else to marry Africans, but there aren't enough Africans to go round.)

So if anatomically modern humans (Homo Sapiens) are all of recent African origin, what became of the earlier breeds of proto-humans that spread

across the world a million or so years before us? In Europe, it's clear that our ancestors and the Neanderthals cohabited in the same areas for many thousands of years — but the Neanderthals, like their cousins in Asia, eventually disappeared.

"I think it was the development of language proper, about 50,000 to 60,000 years ago, that changed the behaviour of H. Sapiens and caused them to push out the Neanderthals," speculates Ian Tattersall, curator of anatomy at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. But did we kill them off, or did they interbreed with us and get absorbed into the more successful human population, or did they just die of disappointment?

The sentimentalists want to believe we intermarried, but a study last year by Svante Paabo of Munich University knocked that notion on the head. Using a technique known as DNA amplification, he cloned Neanderthal DNA from bone fragments and compared it with human DNA.

There were 27 differences between Homo Sapiens and Neanderthals in a 379 base-pair strip of DNA, whereas the entire human population of the world differs by only eight pairs along this strip. "It indicates that Neanderthals had nothing to do with our history," explained Paabo.

We still don't know how the Neanderthals and their relatives met their end, but by 30,000 years ago we were the only hominid species left standing. And over the next 20,000 years little happened that was new and exciting except that we crossed into the Americas and filled up the rest of the world.

It was a time of great conformity: everywhere we lived in hunting-and-gathering groups of only a hundred or so, and hunter-gatherers make their living in essentially the same way no matter what the continent or climate. But it was also the time of maximum diversity, with a new tribe, a new language and new customs every ten kilometres or so.

If the behaviour of contemporary hunting-and-gathering groups is any guide, they were often engaged in low-level warfare with their neighbours. Nevertheless, it was, in some senses, an idyllic time: the closest that real history has ever come to Rousseau's 'state of nature.' And then the steamrollers began to move.

The writer is London-based independent journalist and historian. His articles are published in 45 countries

Five years of the Oslo accords

Oslo architect
irked on deal's
anniversaryBy Janine Zacharia
Reuters

FIVE YEARS ago, Yossi Beilin helped forge a peace deal which he believed could create a new Middle East.

But the soft-spoken Israeli architect of the Oslo interim accords now finds peacemaking mired in old distrusts deepened by the man he calls "the worst prime minister Israel has ever had" — Benjamin Netanyahu.

"Netanyahu was not elected to implement my dream," 50-year-old Beilin, a member of the main opposition Labour Party, told Reuters in an interview at his Tel Aviv apartment.

His home is a short walk from where prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, who sealed the Oslo accords with the PLO's Yasser Arafat on the White House lawn on September 13, 1993, was shot dead two years later by a Jewish extremist opposed to his peace policies.

The thing Netanyahu knew was that he hated Oslo. The thing he didn't know is what would be better," Beilin said about the right-wing Likud leader elected prime minister in 1996.

Beilin shepherded the Middle East peace process from secret talks in Norway to the landmark signing of the Oslo accords with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Like so many of his ideas which were shunned at first as too radical or premature, Beilin's long-held beliefs that Israel should recognise the PLO and that the Palestinians should gain self-determination became policy with Oslo.

"Without Rabin's support, analytical thinking and decision-making, the Oslo process would never have been significantly advanced or concluded," wrote David Makovsky, author of the 1996 book "Making Peace with the PLO."

"Without Beilin, however, Oslo would never have been attempted," Beilin was responsible for initiating Oslo. But when the Norwegian government said it was sponsoring a gathering last month to mark the fifth anniversary of the initialing of the Oslo accords, Beilin was not impressed.

"I'm not fond of these social gatherings. That's my personal taste," Beilin said. He said there was no cause to celebrate what he sees as the slow destruction of his diplomatic labours by Netanyahu.

Netanyahu, who reluctantly inherited the Oslo process and its core "land-for-peace" formula, declined an invitation to attend last month's Oslo ceremony. Beilin was not surprised.

He said Netanyahu had tried since his election victory over Labour Party incumbent Shimon Peres to slow down the Oslo process without providing an alternate vision. Netanyahu and his supporters counter that Oslo was fundamentally flawed, failing to provide Israel with the security it had a right to expect.

He has called it "land for nothing" insisting territorial transfers must be matched by precise Palestinian security actions.

Beilin said the Oslo process is not dead, just "stalled" as evidenced by 18 months of deadlock in the peace talks.

He said Netanyahu may get the fuel he needs to end Oslo on May 4, 1999 — the deadline for a final settlement under interim accords — when Arafat has said he will unilaterally declare a Palestinian state.

Netanyahu has said such a move violates the bedrock peace pledge to negotiate the future of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and would free Israel from its peace obligations.

"That would be the only serious way for Netanyahu to get away with the end of Oslo

without paying a huge price," Beilin said Netanyahu could not turn back the clock.

"We are not going to de-recognise the PLO," he said. Beilin still believes a Palestinian state is in the making, but says he is unsure whether it will emerge within the next five years.

"It is better for us that it will happen, but whether it will happen, who knows?" he said.

Beilin has long been a behind-the-scenes player in Middle East peacemaking.

A member of parliament for 10 years and father of two sons, he has lived his life in the shadow of Israel's leading dove Shimon Peres, so much so that Rabin referred to him disdainfully as "Peres's poodle."

After seven years as Labour Party spokesman, Beilin served as cabinet secretary, foreign ministry director-general, deputy foreign minister and minister-without-portfolio under Rabin and Peres.

His dovish views on the peace process have made him the Israeli darling of the Palestinians. Even in opposition, Beilin meets Arafat every two months and has regular contact with Palestinian negotiators.

Asked whether he trusts Arafat, whose image changed from guerrilla to peacemaker with Oslo, Beilin said: "I find it hard to trust anybody." In 1995 Beilin signed an understanding with leading Palestinian negotiator Mahmoud Abbas, the only detailed proposal to date for a final status agreement between Israel and the PLO.

Under the initiative, Israel would annex three major blocs of Jewish settlements and leave the remainder to elect whether to remain under the authority of a Palestinian state which would stretch over 90 per cent of the West Bank plus the Gaza Strip.

Now Beilin has drafted a proposal to extend the deadline for a final status agreement from May 1999 to January 2001, an idea he says has been welcomed by the Americans and the Palestinians.

Beilin's heavy demeanour has seemed to alienate him from much of the Israeli public. Last year, he lost to former army chief of staff, Ehud Barak, in a battle for the leadership of the Labour Party.

Beilin sought at the time to soften his look by scrapping his tie and sporting a black T-shirt beneath his blazer but has not managed to shed his image as an aloof academic.

"He's a brilliant guy but he shouldn't be a politician. He's a behind-the-scenes man," said Jerusalem Post columnist Calev Ben-David. "He has no following because he has zero charisma. He really comes off as an elitist." Beilin defends his status as a politician, saying he is "neither an academic nor an intellectual."

He describes himself as an "agent of change" — one who sees a problem and then drafts a plan to fix it. He has taken the lead in many volatile areas, penning proposals for a unilateral withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon and for bridging gaps between secular and Orthodox Israeli Jews.

Detractors say the proposals reinforce Beilin's image as a bookish academic. But Beilin's serious approach to politics, in contrast to the shoot-from-the-hip style of many Israeli politicians, has also produced prophetic results. Oslo was only one of several of his initiatives to become mainstream.

His frank statements about the need to reduce \$3 billion in annual U.S. aid to Israel presaged what has become policy. Now his movement for an end to Israel's occupation of south Lebanon, he argues, has put the issue on the map.



The Washington handshake five years ago (file photo)

Is Israel demanding what's
already being done?

As it insists Arafat is failing to fight terrorism, the country has calmed period in decade as Lee Hockstader reports:

ONE PARADOX of the comatose Middle East peace process is this:

Israel insists it will make no deal to advance the peace until Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority does more to combat terror and ensure the Jewish state's security. To hammer home that message, the government complains the Palestinians not only fail to fight terror, but actively encourage it.

Yet, judging by the numbers of victims of Palestinian attacks, Israel has not been so secure from terror in more than a decade.

According to figures from the prime minister's office — which uses a more inclusive definition of terror than even the Israeli army — there have been fewer Israelis killed by terrorists in the last two years — 36 — than in any comparable period since 1987-88. In the past 12 months, seven Israelis have died in terror attacks.

By contrast, 528 Israelis died in traffic accidents last year.

No one can guarantee there will not be another uptick in bloodletting if the political winds shift. Moreover, while the death toll since 1996 may be modest compared to previous periods, hundreds more have been injured, some severely. Some planned terrorist strikes against Israel fizzled either because of intervention and effective intelligence or because of simple luck.

And Israel remains one of the most security-obsessed societies on Earth, a place where it is impossible to go to the mall, the supermarket or the movies without submitting to at least a quick search.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that by most measures, the struggle between Arabs and Jews in Israel has become among the least violent of the world's low-intensity conflicts.

It is against this backdrop that Washington has launched its latest diplomatic initiative to break the 18-month logjam in the Israeli-Palestinian talks. Yet as Dennis Ross, the chief U.S.

Middle East envoy, shuttles between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, security issues continue to occupy center stage, and there has been no perceptible shift in Israel's contention that the Palestinian Authority has done little to combat terror on the territory it controls.

The reasons for the diminution of violence against Israelis are a subject of ideologically charged debate. The right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu suggests it deserves credit for the dip by making clear to the Palestinians that no further concessions will be made if terror attacks persist.

At the same time, it contends that Arafat's security forces have done little to dismantle Hamas, the militant Islamic group that has carried out bloody attacks in the past.

"It's one thing to hold back the terrorists, which is what they're doing now," said a senior Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity. "But they are not doing anything about the infrastructure, which means they are keeping violence and terrorism as a viable option." The Palestinian Authority insists terror is down because its security apparatus has stopped Hamas in its tracks by seizing weapons and intensifying surveillance. To do more, it argues — to move against the schools, clubs and other institutions that comprise Hamas's infrastructure — would be to trigger civil war on the territory Arafat controls.

"We've cracked down on terror because it's in our interests to move forward with the peace process," Mohammed Dahlan, chief of Palestinian security in the Gaza Strip, said in a recent interview. "Our activities can be judged by the results." Whatever the case, the decline in terror goes nearly unremarked in Israel.

Netanyahu rarely mentions that attacks have slackened since he took office, and no one seems inclined to believe that a new security climate may prevail.

One explanation is that Israeli Jews cannot quickly forget the carnage that

filled their television screens in early 1996, when Hamas suicide bombers killed dozens of people on city buses and in a Tel Aviv shopping center. Those blasts, and others like them, also destroyed the idea that the Oslo peace accord of 1993 had brought Israel a respite from terror.

The frequency of those attacks, and their incredible ruthlessness — seeing the dismembered bodies of children spread over the streets — created in Israelis an impression of war," said Yaron Ezrahi, a political philosopher. "That trauma has remained a very powerful experience." The explosions also created a new political dynamic, mainly to the benefit of Netanyahu. A candidate for prime minister at the time of the 1996 bombings, he rode into office playing the security card. Since then he has wasted no opportunity to bash the Palestinian Authority on terror, even as the incidence and casualties of terror have declined.

"He can still rely on this memory and trauma, and he invokes it every time he negotiates," Ezrahi said.

To keep the spotlight on terror even as it becomes rarer, the Israeli government has released videotapes of Palestinian schoolchildren chanting paeans to suicide bombers on a popular juvenile television show, of Palestinian teenagers burning Israeli buses and towns in effigy and of Arafat glorifying a slain Palestinian bomb maker as a "brave, holy martyr." The goal is to show that while terror may have abated lately, the Palestinians still have a basic strategy of wiping Israel off the map, government officials say. That sort of rhetoric leads some Palestinians to suspect the Israeli government would actually welcome a surge in violence.

"I believe Netanyahu dreams of a suicide attack in order to shed all his responsibilities under the peace process," said Dahlan, the Palestinian security chief. "It would lift the U.S. pressure on him, and he'd be able to say to the world, 'You see? But we're denying him the pleasure.'"

— Washington Post

Looking back at a hallelujah

By Uri Dromi

AN ANNIVERSARY is always a good time to contemplate cherished memories, and how history often cycles back on itself. On Sept. 13, 1993, I was standing with Israeli journalists on the White House South Lawn, watching my prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, shaking the hand of his former enemy, Yasser Arafat. The hallelujah emanating from the joyful crowd still rings in my ears. The unfulfilled promise still pains my heart.

A month earlier in Oslo, after fighting each other for decades, Israelis and Palestinians decided to give peace a chance. Gone were the big dreams, both of the Greater Land of Israel and of Greater Palestine, and each side embarked on the painful path towards accepting a new reality.

A month earlier in Oslo, after fighting each other for decades, Israelis and Palestinians decided to give peace a chance. Gone were the big dreams, both of the Greater Land of Israel and of Greater Palestine, and each side embarked on the painful path towards accepting a new reality.

Abba Eban, the great Israeli diplomat, described the central theme of this process as "reciprocal self-interest" — Israelis were promised security; Palestinians were expecting sover-

eignty. Oslo was a turn from a zero-sum game to a win-win proposition.

But after the initial euphoria came the backlash of extremism, with terror attacks wreaking havoc. Violent anti-government demonstrations rocked the country.

Yet Mr. Rabin persevered. Like many Israelis he had his doubts, but having made up his mind, he carried on with steadfast courage. By and large, Israelis responded to his leadership. That fatal day in November 1995, when he was overpowered by three deadly bullets, changed history.

I had little time to reflect on what had happened until the funeral. Only when the casket was carried in, wrapped in the flag of Israel, did it finally hit me, that in it lay the body of my prime minister, and I began to sob. The man next to me grabbed my hand and held it quietly. He was chief of King Hussein's Royal Guard. We had met before, at the peace signing ceremony between Israel and Jordan, another fruit of Oslo. I can still feel the grip of his warm, comforting hand.

Finally, I remember the anti-terrorism summit meeting in Sharm Al Sheikh in 1996, convened in the wake of suicide bomb attacks in Israel. The image of the leaders of the Middle East marching together, arms linked in resolve to save the peace from its enemies, is still fresh in my mind.

Indulging in memories, however, will not rejuvenate the peace process. The believers in Oslo must reach for something more solid to preserve what is left of their optimism. And that is the continuing desire for peace by Israeli people.

While the peace process may have fallen into a coma, it is not dead. If Benjamin Netanyahu decides to resuscitate it, he will find most Israelis backing him wholeheartedly.

The writer was chief spokesman for the Israeli government from 1992 to 1996.

— The International Herald Tribune

Road from
Oslo patrolled
with suspicionBy Aimee Rhodes
Reuters

WHEN ISRAEL and the Palestine Liberation Organisation signed the Oslo interim peace accords five years ago, the focus was on reconciliation after decades of enmity. No one ever said it would be easy and Colonel Abu Al Ula has learned just how hard it can be.

Ula returned to Gaza from exile in 1994 and now spends his days with Israeli soldiers as commander of the Palestinian military liaison unit in the southern Gaza Strip.

Palestinian and Israeli forces conduct joint patrols at key intersections and along main arteries in Gaza and the West Bank under provisions that the architects of Oslo and subsequent accords saw as a means to enhance security and foster trust.

"I have coffee with my Israeli counterpart," said Ula.

"We talk about our families and then I look out of my office window and see Israeli soldiers carrying out exercises on how to take over this joint compound if there is trouble. Where is the trust?"

Ula and fellow Palestinian officers view the patrols in many ways as a reflection of the rocky route the Oslo process has taken since PLO leader Yasser Arafat and then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin sealed the interim peace accords with a handshake on the White House lawn on September 13, 1993.

Israel handed over some 60 per cent of Gaza to Palestinian self-rule in May 1994 after 27 years of military occupation.

Twenty-seven per cent of the West Bank is also under full or partial Palestinian control but the past 18 months have brought nothing but paralysis in peace talks and mutual recrimination.

"When we started four years ago the work was very hard because the sides didn't know each other, but there were good and honest intentions so we succeeded," said Ula, 46, who returned to Gaza from 26 years abroad one month after the 1994 handover.

Driving in his jeep on a bumpy dirt road, Ula said his task of late has been fraught with frustration.

He blamed the decline in relations with his Israeli counterparts on right-wing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, saying that since the Likud Party leader came to power in May 1996 his work has become an uphill battle.

"Under Netanyahu, things have changed for the worse," said Ula.

The drafters of the Oslo accords envisioned the joint patrols as a means to build mutual trust and understanding on the gradual path to a final peace.

Israel for long pointed to the patrols as evidence that cooperation could be successful at grassroots level, helping to reduce friction and head off confrontation between Palestinians and Jewish settlers.

The Israeli army, however, declined to facilitate interviews with its liaison officers for this feature in an indication of the changed mood.

When one recent patrol readied to depart from Gaza's Gush Katif junction in four-wheel drive vehicles flying trademark orange flags, officers from the two sides exchanged barely a word.

Ula and an Israeli official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said

their men were worlds apart.

"Some of the men were developing relatively good relations with their Israeli counterparts, drinking coffee and talking, but this has changed," Ula said.

"On the surface things may look okay, but inside things are becoming increasingly frustrating." In a bid to foster better relations between their men, the Israeli and Palestinian commanders of liaison offices in the West Bank town of Jericho arranged a "fun day" at the Dead Sea this week for joint patrol officers.

Israeli soldiers and Palestinian policemen played football and backgammon before getting down to the serious business of discussing ways to reduce friction between them.

"We've patched things up," Israeli officer Amal Garan, a Druze Muslim, told reporters as he pointed to a Palestinian officer "I had a run-in with last week."

Patrols have been suspended during volatile periods in peacemaking and at other times relations between the officers have been strained.

Ula said the turning point came in September 1996 when Netanyahu authorised the opening of a second entrance to a tourist tunnel in Jerusalem's Old City that runs near the Haram Al Sharif (Noble Sanctuary), the Islamic holy site known to Jews as the Temple Mount.

Palestinian rage at the perceived desecration of an Islamic shrine prompted gun battles in Gaza and the West Bank.

Palestinians and Israelis who had patrolled together trained their weapons on one another.

Sixty-one Arabs and 15 Israelis were killed in the clashes and the confidence that had been building since 1993 was broken.

Several less deadly incidents in the two years since the tunnel crisis showed that the trust has yet to be regained.

"It was better two years ago, I dare say there was a kind of a friendship," Lieutenant Mazen Abu Mulaq, a member of the joint patrol, said as he climbed into his battered jeep.

"Personally I did not make friends. For me it was a business-like relationship, but sometimes we drank tea together."

"Not anymore. Now we are just trying to get through the eight hours of work without any problems," Mulaq said.

Peace talks have stagnated since March last year over continued Jewish settlement building on land occupied by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war and over suicide bombings of Israeli targets by Palestinian Muslim militants.

Israel is obligated under interim peace accords to transfer more of the West Bank to Palestinian self-rule but insists it will do so only if Arafat's Palestinian Authority meets stringent security commitments.

U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross has returned to the region this week to try to narrow differences on an American plan which would involve a transfer of 13 per cent more land to the Palestinians.

Ula, meanwhile, regards his work as one of the remnants of a peace plan that has stopped in its tracks.

"The only thing left of the peace process is the joint patrols, because politically everything is deadlocked. The joint patrols are the last vestige of the process," he said.

Jordan wins \$21m of deals with Iraq

AMMAN (AFP) — Jordanian companies have secured a further \$21 million in contracts with Iraq under the U.N. oil-for-food deal, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said Saturday.

The 13 new contracts, which include deals to supply Iraq with soap, vegetable oil and medicines, bring Jordanian companies' income from the oil-for-food accord to more than \$350 million since it was launched in December 1996.

Under the accord, Iraq is now allowed to sell up to

\$5.2 billion worth of crude oil every six months to finance imports of humanitarian supplies.

The accord is designed to ease the hardships of sweeping U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq after its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Iraq, which remains the Kingdom's main trade partner despite the embargo, also trades with its neighbour under a separate protocol allowed by the U.N. Sanctions Committee.

Korean economic team starts visit

AMMAN (Petra) — A delegation of South Korean industrialists and businessmen arrived here Saturday on a three-day visit during which they will hold talks with their Jordanian counterparts on means of enhancing cooperation in economic and investment fields.

Korean ambassador to Jordan, Lee Kyung Woo, said in a press conference that the visit aims at developing bilateral ties in political and economic fields, particularly increasing the volume of trade exchange.

Woo indicated that Jordanian-Korean joint investments are on the rise noting that joint investments have increased to \$5 million.

He said that a plant for manufacturing filters for vehicles will be operated before the end of this year in Jordan.

"Jordanian businessmen invested JD3 million and their Korean counterparts invested

JD300,000 for this venture," said Woo.

He added that Korean experts will be operating the plant which will make use of the Korean techniques and technological know-how.

The ambassador stressed that investment opportunities between the two countries are encouraging due to the low prices of Korean commodities. "This leads to adequate profits for Jordanian investors," he said.

Woo revealed that Jordan exported \$20 million of products to Korea during the first half of 1998 while its imports from Korea amounted to \$60 million.

"The future is promising for both Jordanian and Korean economies," he concluded noting that the obstacles facing the Korean economy at present are part of international imbalances and are on their way to be solved.

Egypt, Lebanon sign free trade zone agreement

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt and Lebanon have signed three economic agreements including a free trade zone accord at the end of an official visit by Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri.

Egypt and Lebanon signed an agreement to set up a free trade zone, an accord to unify the quality of products sold in each other's country as well as a memorandum of understanding on maritime transport, the Egyptian news agency MENA reported.

Egypt's prime minister said the free trade zone accord was signed at "lifting obstacles facing trade" between the two

countries and subsequently to "open the way to joint investment projects." He did not elaborate.

"Other Arab countries will follow suit and this will help us accomplish our goal of setting up a common Arab market," the premier said, according to MENA.

Hariri told reporters here the "floodgates will open Jan. 1" for bilateral trade between Cairo and Beirut.

The volume of trade between the two countries stands at \$74 million in Egypt's favour, with Lebanon selling only \$16 million worth of goods to Cairo.

Japanese economy plunges into its darkest hour

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan has plunged deeper into recession when data showed that the economy had shrunk for the third quarter in a row, and the stock market registered the biggest points fall this year.

"Japan is in its darkest hour," said the country's chief economic planner Taichi Sakaiya.

Gross domestic product in the world's second-biggest economy fell by 0.8 per cent in the three months to June, an annualised rate of contraction of 3.3 per cent, the Economic Planning Agency said.

"The figures were much more severe than we expected," said Sakaiya, who heads the agency.

"This is the first time we have suffered minus growth in three consecutive quarters since the end of World War II," he said.

It was the fourth-biggest quarterly contraction of the Japanese economy since the war and threw out the government's growth predictions for the year.

"This result shows that it is impossible to achieve our 1.9 per cent growth target this fiscal year," the year to March 1999, Sakaiya said.

The deepening economic and banking crisis in Japan together with concern over the U.S. economy, with U.S. President Bill Clinton facing the threat of impeachment, wreaked havoc on the Tokyo stock market.

The key Nikkei index plunged by 749.05 points, or 5.1 per cent, the biggest point fall this year, to close at 13,916.98, just a hair's breadth above a 12-year low reached late August.

Dealers warned this slide, which followed heavy falls on Wall Street Thursday, signalled looming global economic turmoil.

Their concern was matched by Japan's top finance official, Eisuke Sakakibara, usually a professed optimist on Tokyo's economic health.

"I don't think the Asian or world crisis is over," he said in an interview with the Financial Times.

"We are on the verge of a deflationary spiral and we need to avoid that. From what we have observed in July and August, the July to September quarter will not be good," he said.

The Economic Planning Agency said consumer spending fell 0.8 per cent, housing investment slid 1.0 per cent and capital investment tumbled 5.5 per cent in the quarter.

"The situation surrounding private investment is

extremely severe particularly among small firms," Sakaiya said.

He warned the figures for the current quarter were also likely to be grim. In the previous two quarters the economy has shrunk by 0.4 per cent and 1.3 per cent respectively.

"In the July to September quarter more people are likely to suffer difficulties," Sakaiya said.

Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi pledged the government's efforts to put the economy on a recovery path.

"Given the severe situation, we will make our utmost efforts to realise an early economic recovery," Obuchi told reporters.

At the Bank of Japan officials have an equally bleak view of their country's economy, and tried to help by saying they would push down a key interest rate.

In the central bank's monthly report, released Friday, it said economic conditions in Japan "continue to deteriorate broadly."

"The economy is not likely to move to a self-sustained recovery path led by private sector demand in the near-term given that overall economic activity has fallen to substantially low levels," it said.

Private investment "continues to fall substantially, and housing investment declines further." Consumer spending "has signalled no sign of a recovery, despite the implementation of special income tax cuts." Premier Obuchi has pledged more than six trillion yen (\$44 billion) in individual and corporate tax cuts.

The central bank has said it will guide down the overnight call rate, the rate at which banks lend to each other overnight, to 0.25 per cent, its first policy change in three years.

Japan's top economic planner Sakaiya made clear how desperate was the central bank's move. "On this point the Bank of Japan threw its last ball," he said.

Japanese newspapers Saturday urged politicians to speed up financial reforms, with one warning that the economy faces an "unprecedented emergency."

"The recession has deepened further," the Nihon Keizai Shimbun said in an editorial following Friday's announcement that the economy shrank for a record third straight quarter.

"The continued contraction does not merely show that the economy is in

extremely severe or stagnant situation. It shows we are in an unprecedented emergency," the business daily said.

"The decline in gross domestic product has been chiefly due to contraction in private consumption, housing construction and capital investment by private companies," the Yomiuri Shimbun said in an editorial.

"As Economic Planning Agency Director General Taichi Sakaiya has pointed out, the Japanese economy may be facing even tougher times," the mass-circulation daily said. "Japan, which is supposed to be the key importer for other Asian countries, instead pulled their economies down."

Newspapers demanded that parliament immediately pass crucial financial reform bills to dispose of huge bad loans which many banks have suffered since the end of the speculative "bubble" economy in the late 1980s.

"The most urgent tasks are to solve the problems related to the Long-Term Credit Bank of Japan and to pass into law the bills aimed at rehabilitating the financial system," the Yomiuri said.

"Yet these two issues have become bogged down because of objections from opposition parties," the daily said.

"The opposition parties should become more aware of their responsibility and join hands with the government and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to prevent the economy from entering a deflationary spiral," it said.

The ruling party proposed a compromise plan on Friday but failed to reach agreement with opposition lawmakers, officials said.

Opposition policy planners concluded that the compromise was "not good enough," the officials said.

The impasse centred on the fact that the scheme still allows the government to use taxpayers' money to bail out failing banks before they become insolvent, the officials said.

The LDP had wanted to pump public money into ailing banks before they fail but the opposition had insisted money must not be spent until a bank collapses.

A fresh round of talks between the ruling and opposition parties is expected to start Monday, ruling party officials said.

Newspapers also said distrust of the government's

economic policy was growing.

"The Bank of Japan has eased its grip on credit by guiding the short-term money market rates lower.

But right after the central bank played its trump card, the Nikkei index plunged," the Yomiuri said.

"This reflects the market's skepticism over the

ability of the political system to put these ideas into reality, rather than skepticism over the effectiveness of the measures themselves," it said.

REUTERS • REUTERS • The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.6930	0.6978	1.3872	130.56	1.5166	1673.00	1.9080	5.6845
DE Mark	0.5907	1.0000	0.3526	0.6193	77.13	0.8963	967.60	1.1257	3.3573
GB Sterling	1.6735	2.8344	1.0000	2.3215	218.65	2.5380	2786.77	3.1897	9.5130
CH Franc	0.7209	1.2196	0.4302	1.0000	94.12	1.0925	1205.16	1.3730	4.0949
JP Yen	0.0077	1.2948	0.4667	1.0610	1.0000	1.1599	12.90	145.77	4.3476
CA Dollar	0.6594	1.2916	0.4225	1.0566	1.16	1.0000	1270.80	1.4551	4.3265
IT Lira	0.0005	1.0114	0.3567	0.0829	1282.54	0.9080	1.0000	11.39	3.3958
NL Guilder	0.5247	0.8876	0.3132	0.7277	66.48	0.7953	877.29	1.0000	2.9809
FR Franc	0.1759	0.2977	0.1050	0.2430	22.95	0.2667	33.61	33.5100	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7090	3.7805	0.3770	3.6398	0.3025	3.6728	1617.00	3.4015
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	5.2898	0.5377	5.1337	0.4267	5.1803	2139.63	4.7976
Saudi Riyal	0.2668	0.1890	1.0000	0.97	0.9807	0.98	1.0000	404.48	0.9069
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8807	9.9488	1.0000	9.66	9.8024	9.74	4024.09	9.0230
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0304	1.0304	1.0000	0.9831	1.01	416.78	0.9345
Kuwait Dinar	3.3058	2.3438	12.3983	1.2462	12.03	12.14	12.14	5014.89	0.9345
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0212	1.0205	0.9910	0.9824	1.00	413.04	0.9281
Lebanese/1000	0.66	0.4674	2.4723	0.2485	2.3993	0.1994	2.4211	1.0000	2.2423
Egyptian	0.2340	0.2084	1.1025	0.1108	1.0701	0.0889	1.0798	445.98	1.0000

Energy			Mid-East Currencies					
Oils	Last	revised	Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
Brent	0.00	0.00	SA Riyal	0.2688	0.4517	0.18932	0.37014	34.8614
W. Texas	14.36	14.68	AE Dirham	0.2723	0.46123	0.1627	0.37797	35.5999
Bonny	0.00	0.00	KW Dinar	3.3058	5.5991	1.9755	4.58926	432.156
Dubai	12.90	12.21	BH Dinar	0.3770	4.49438	1.58504	3.68189	346.861
Ug. Bar	128.00	128.00	CY Pound	1.9919	3.3723	1.1895	2.7632	260.043

Metal Prices		
Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	292.6	293.1
Silver (oz's)	6.02	5.05
Platinum (oz's)	364.3	366.3
AL (3 Months)	1371	1374
CU (3 Months)	1690	1695
Zinc (3 Months)	1035	1039
Lead (3 Months)	524	528
NI (3 Months)	4070	4100

Libor Fixing					
Period	- 1 -	- 3 -	- 6 -	- 1 -	
Cncy	Month	Months	Months	Year	
USD	6.5898	5.5000	5.4063	5.2383	
GBP	7.4375	7.4414	7.2969	7.1172	
JPY	0.4492	0.4375	0.4844	0.4922	
DEM	3.4609	3.4698	3.5313	3.5391	
FRF	1.5000	1.5313	1.6280	1.6876	
CHF	3.5690	3.5215	3.5332	3.5625	
ITL	5.2480	5.0100	4.4890	-	

Main Equity Indices							
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cts
NewYork	DOW JONES	7795.5	179.95	2.36	7817.39	7518.99	7515.54
NewYork	S&P 500	1009.06	28.87	2.95	1009.06	968.71	980.19
London	FT-SE 100	5118.6	-18	-0.35	5137.7	4988.8	5136.6
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	13916.98	-749.05	-5.11	14551.3	13725.6	14666
Paris	CAC 40	3678.34	-11.01	-0.31	3621.86	3505.62	3589.35
Frankfurt	DAX	4737.15	-10.18	-0.21	4777.79	4606.04	4747.33

Energy		
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	111.33	Spot
Cocoa (\$/ton)	2008	Spot
Sugar (\$/ton)	214.2	Spot
Wheat (\$/ton)	101	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	24.56	Spot
Tea (c/lbs)	125	Spot
Barley (\$/bush)	0	Spot
Rice (\$/ton)	415	Spot

* JOD Cross Rates		
Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1839	1.1888
DE Mark	0.4175	0.4196
CH Franc	0.5084	0.5109
FR Franc	0.1244	0.125
JP Yen	0.541	0.5437
NL Guilder	0.37	0.3719
IT Lira	0.4226	0.4247

* JOD Cross Rates

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1839	1.1898
DE Mark	0.4175	0.4196
CH Franc	0.5084	0.5109
FR Franc	0.1244	0.125
JP Yen	0.541	0.5437
NL Guilder	0.37	0.3719
IT Lira	0.4226	0.4247

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Scallion volcano
- Movie jets
- "On the Beach" author
- Destitute
- Tan shade
- Money-grubber
- News piece
- Tack
- Actress Dunne
- Suspect in Clue
- Actress Russo
- Resistance unit
- Beer choice
- Geriatric, for instance
- Bad actor
- Thick
- Actress Lupino
- Ballot
- "Catch-22" character
- Computer image
- Yucatan year
- Over the length of
- Old pronoun
- Hour fractions
- Understand
- Thin rod
- Mountain in Thessaly
- Beasties' NCO
- Part of WASP
- Yogi, e.g.
- Assistant
- Harpichord descendant
- Indonesian island
- Clothed
- Madison Ave. workers
- In the past, in the past
- Shade trees

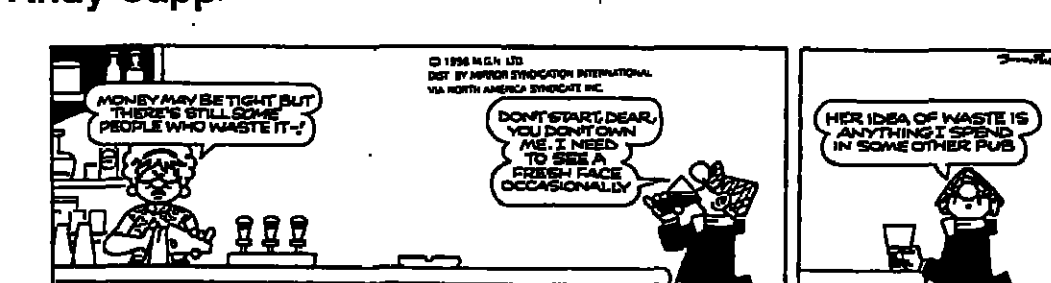
DOWN

- Larger-than-life story
- Dorothy's dog
- Playwright
- Coward
- Knight's protection
- Tranquil
- Mountain climber
- Neat and tidy
- "Star Trek" crew member
- Horseshoe makers
- U.S. Grant's first name
- Word before friendly
- Cultivate
- Sooner than, in poetry
- At no time
- Kind of energy
- Let in
- Archibald
- Delight in
- Old movie-house name
- Commotion
- Orange-roofed restaurants
- Casualty
- Bottom lines
- Make night
- Commingle
- Male heir
- Actor Kilmor
- Pine Tree State
- Arbor, MI
- Billiards shot
- Filet
- Bottom lines
- de corps
- Recumbent
- Swiftly
- Pronounced
- Pop quiz
- French cleric
- Get closer
- Medicinal
- Mild cheese
- Crimson and scarlet
- Rejuvenation resort

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen



JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ROCKA

TALAN

RUMAI

BEDFAL

Answer: ROCK, TALE, RUMI, BEDF

Yesterday's Jumbles: HONEY NAVAL WORTHY PLAQUE

Answer: You might call a broken window at the castle this - A ROYAL PANE

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Government to continue adjustment programme

THE GOVERNMENT is continuing the economic adjustment programme, Minister of State for Development Affairs Taher Kanaan said in a press statement. Stressing that the adjustment process has no limit to remedy the existing imbalances, he denied that there is a national reform programme plan to replace the one currently being followed.

Kanaan indicated that the economic adjustment programme is a pure national scheme and that it has achieved acceptable positive results during its implementation in the past. He emphasised that the government continues to coordinate with international institutions, such as the World Bank and the International

Monetary Fund, to sound out their views about the adjustment programme.

"There is a common misunderstanding that the relationship of the government with the international financial institutions is that of carrying out dictated conditions and policies," he said. "The relationship in fact does not go beyond that of guidance and advice." Kanaan explained that the observations and notes presented by these institutions are always studied and examined by the government which can either agree to it or not.

The minister stressed the importance of continuing economic reforms until arriving at the aspired economic situation (Al Ra'i).

Biltaji expects tourism investments to reach JD600 million by year 2000

TOURISM AND Antiquities Minister Aqel Biltaji expects tourism investments in the Kingdom to reach JD600 million until the year 2000. He told businessmen and investors that Jordan has tourism characteristics that are not available anywhere else in the world. He highlighted the therapeutic value of the Dead Sea water noting that all services will be available at the Dead Sea area by the early months of next year.

Biltaji said his ministry has a tourism promotional plan for all the touristic sites in the Kingdom through optimising the

Jordanian tourism output. He explained that the plan includes organising visits for tour and travel agents from various world countries to Jordanian archaeological sites and showing films and organising seminars, lectures and exhibitions in major world cities. The plan also includes hosting officials from various countries, the minister said noting that the ministry is currently hosting 12 renowned columnists who write in prominent international newspaper to promote the Kingdom touristically (Al Ra'i).

Jordanian-Syrian committee meets this week

THE JOINT Jordanian-Syrian Industry Committee will convene its meetings in Damascus in mid-September and the Jordanian side will be led by Industry, Trade and Supply Minister Mohammad Saleh Horani. Discussions are expected to focus on consolidating economic ties,

especially trade between the two countries, and resolving any impediments in this regard. The two sides will also discuss the possibility of holding the meetings of the joint Jordanian-Syrian Committee which has not met for more than two years (Al Ra'i).

Israel hotels set prices for Millennium festivity

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli hotels have published their room rates for the next two years, in a move aimed at helping to market Millennium tourism packages, the Israel Hotel Association has said.

About four million pilgrims are expected to visit the Holy Land to celebrate the birth of Jesus, sparking a revival in the country's tourism industry, which was hit by a wave of suicide bombings by militants in March 1996.

"Generally we publish hotel prices just one year in advance. But now we are publishing prices from September 1998 to March 2001, which is unheard of," Avi Rosenthal, director of the association, told Reuters.

"We decided that (this approach) will help market Israel, and allow the Millennium to be marketed already," he said.

Rosenthal said the industry was taking a risk by committing itself far in advance on prices and termed the increases modest.

The association said room rates would rise an average of 5.9 per cent for the 1999-2000 tourism year and another seven per cent for the year 2000-2001.

"The price rise is moderate, about an average of six

per cent in nominal dollar terms, and even lower in real terms," Rosenthal said.

He added that countries hosting big tourism events like the Expo or the Olympics generally hiked hotel prices far more. He added that the volatility of the dollar and the launch of the Euro in 1999 made the pricing policy especially risky.

The association has issued two booklets with the price list, which covers 300 hotels and 39,000 rooms, for distribution to tour operators and airlines worldwide.

Industry officials are looking to the year 2000 and the Millennium celebrations to revive the industry.

General assembly meeting of tobacco firm called off

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — An extraordinary meeting of the general assembly of the Jordan Tobacco and Cigarettes Company called for before the government appointed a new board to the financially troubled firm has been postponed indefinitely, according to an advertisement in the local papers.

The company's caretaker Hatim Shahin who placed the advertisement said as the government appointed a new board of directors it was meaningless to hold the general assembly meeting.

Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply last week appointed a new board of directors for the troubled company comprising of representatives from the private and the public sectors. The board will look at

all options to save the troubled company including liquidation and capitalising the debts.

"The former board of directors wants a voluntary liquidation, while the government and the creditors firmly oppose that and consider the idea as a ploy to sneak out from responsibility," Shahin told the Jordan Times.

"The meeting of the general assembly is pointless because the new board took charge of the management," said Fathallah Emrani, of the Social Security Corporation which is represented in the company's new board.

The new board of directors is headed by a representative from the Arab Bank, (the major creditor of the debt-ridden company) and includes representatives from the Ministry of

Industry, Trade and Supply, ANZ Grindlays, Industrial Development Bank, the Social Security Corporation and the Ministry of Finance.

The tobacco company's sales were negatively affected by the entry of two cigarette manufacturers over the last three years after decades of monopoly and state protection.

According to its records the company lost JD2.5 million in 1996. Subsequently, the ratio of total liability to shareholders equity increased from 67.20 per cent to 78.53 per cent. Its current liabilities reached JD21.

Tobacco and Cigarettes was established in 1931 and has 400 employees on its payroll. It produces different brands of cigarette including Philadelphia and other brands.

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHAMSANI											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 12/09/1998											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
S 355,500	170,000	ARAB BANK	18.4	0.89	10	280	62900	224.50	223.00	-0.50	
2,100	1,620	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	13.4	4.24	1	500	825	1.66	1.65	-0.01	
S 1,200	1,030	BANK OF JORDAN	E	0.00	6	2353	2471	1.05	1.06	0.01	
1,300	870	MID-EAST INV. BK.	63.7	0.00	2	12000	11640	0.98	0.97	-0.01	
S 2,680	1,550	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	11.1	6.56	3	3850	6083	1.58	1.58	0.00	
S 6,510	2,610	THE BOSSING BK.	19.3	3.28	19	6046	18396	3.06	3.05	-0.01	
S 1,450	1,760	JOR. KOWAT BANK	8	0.00	4	540	965	1.78	1.79	0.01	
S 4,190	2,020	ARAB JOR. INV. BK.	41.1	2.48	2	200	394	2.02	2.02	0.00	
S 1,810	1,690	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	17.9	0.00	4	1550	2698	1.73	1.75	0.02	
S 1,250	930	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	P	0.00	2	1000	970	0.98	0.97	-0.01	
S 3,900	1,350	JOR. INV. FTH. BANK	22.8	3.38	4	618	909	1.48	1.48	0.00	
930	600	PHILADEL. INV. BK.	P	0.00	18	25106	17547	0.69	0.70	0.01	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 295.50		ICMG: +0.14		75		54043		125798
S 4,000	1,380	JERUSALEM INSUR.	9.4	5.80	2	1400	1932	1.38	1.38	-	
S 2,850	1,740	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	7.5	9.26	3	1000	2705	2.70	2.70	-	
S 2,350	1,800	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	9.3	0.00	2	428	835	1.95	1.95	-	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 127.27		ICMG: 0.00		7		2828		5472
S 2,240	1,470	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.6	5.57	14	4550	6734	1.48	1.48	-	
S 1,480	740	NATL. PORTFOLIO	31.1	0.00	10	12750	9945	0.78	0.78	-	
S 1,120	680	REAL ESTATE INV.	14.3	0.00	6	448	326	0.75	0.73	-0.02	
S 1,590	280	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	9	0.00	5	13000	3770	0.30	0.29	-0.01	
S 1,830	1,060	UNITED CO.	9.0	9.65	24	10700	12184	1.13	1.14	0.01	
S 2,350	950	UNITED FOR FINAN. INV.	1.4	5.76	2	450	499	1.09	1.12	0.03	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 108.73		ICMG: -0.02		61		41898		33458
S 3,900	1,840	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	11.6	5.61	6	1437	2815	1.97	1.96	-0.01	
S 4,110	1,600	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	16.9	0.00	3	550	880	1.60	1.60	-	
S 6,500	4,070	ARAB POTASH CO.	20.2	4.88	5	30700	125870	4.10	4.10	-	
S 11,250	10,050	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.2	8.45	8	500	5260	10.54	10.52	-0.02	
S 5,740	2,400	ARAB FARM. MFG.	7.4	2.81	22	5970	18946	2.67	2.67	-	
S 2,250	1,370	GENERAL KILNING	P	4.05	1	300	519	1.68	1.73	0.05	
S 6,350	4,700	DAN ALDARA DV. INV.	6.8	6.21	3	300	1693	5.69	5.64	-0.05	
S 2,980	1,700	ARAB ALUM. IND.	12.9	14.29	1	50	88	1.70	1.75	0.05	
S 570	390	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	14.2	0.00	11	21200	8693	0.42	0.42	-	
S 2,720	1,880	GENERAL INVESTMENT	14.6	3.13	1	1000	3200	3.28	3.20	-0.08	
S 2,300	700	NATL. CARLS WINE-MFAC	33.8	0.00	5	1500	1080	0.72	0.72	-	
S 2,380	1,180	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM	7.8	0.00	11	17600	7140	0.41	0.41	-	
S 1,470	1,150	ARAB FARM. CHEM.	4	13.9	4	684	860	1.26	1.26	-	
S 700	390	FASTER INVEST.	9	0.00	1	150	242	0.58	0.58	-	
S 1,290	530	UNIV. MOD. INDUS.	10.5	3.09	91	101400	65487	0.63	0.66	0.03	
S 930	500	JOR. INDOS. RESOURCES	9	0.00	9	6350	3366	0.52	0.53	0.01	
S 1,600	1,200	NATL. CHOKING	8.8	7.94	5	42000	52920	1.26	1.26	-	
S 1,080	600	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	9.2	15.16	14	7500	4875	0.65	0.65	-	
S 1,580	1,150	EL. & RAY READY WEAR	42.2	0.00	2	250	300	1.19	1.20	0.01	
S 1,310	910	INTL. TOBACCO	6.5	6.34	7	2000	1840	0.92	0.92	-	
S 1,220	880	UNION CH. & VEG.	11.6	0.00	50	875	900	1.00	1.05	0.05	
S 650	650	JORDAN STEEL	9.5	8.24	20	19500	16697	0.85	0.85	-	
S 710	580	NAT. ALUMINIUM	34.2	0.00	63	63874	43912	0.69	0.69	-	
S 670	530	MID-EAST COMPLEX	10.1	0.00	16	10100	5656	0.56	0.56	-	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 80.83		ICMG: 0.00		326		347917		377212
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 177.91		ICMG: +0.10		469		446686		541940
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 12/09/1998											
490	270	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	9	0.00	1	100	39	0.41	0.39	-0.02	
500	340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9	0.00	1	100	40	0.41	0.40	-0.01	
800	500	UNION INV.	9	0.00	9	14700	7789	0.52	0.53	0.01	
620	240	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	8	8250	2145	0.26	0.26	-	
280	080	JOR. INDOS. MATCH-VEHCO	9	0.00	7	25800	2580	0.10	0.10	-	
500	270	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	3	1027	319	0.31	0.31	-	
430	230	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	27.6	0.00	13	11500	2760	0.24	0.24	-	
580	260	NATL. MOLT. SNG. WAFACO	9	0.00	17	24150	7004	0.29	0.29	-	
S 1,210	690	READY MIX CONCRETE	7.5	0.00	2	1250	875	0.72	0.70	-0.02	
S 690	580	MID-EAST PETROL. 90%	E	0.00	1	5000	2400	0.58	0.58	-	
S 1,900	1,130	UNION TOBACCO 87.5%	12.1	6.58	4	16015	26926	1.90	1.90	-	
S 720	570	RAISI FARM.	8	0.00	4	1800	1134	0.63	0.63	-	
S 350	190	TRIS. SNG.	9	0.00	3	850	18	0.17	0.18	0.01	
S 340	160	I. TEXTILE MANUF.	9	0.00	1	100	18	0.17	0.18	0.01	
N 990	540	ADVANCED FARM. IND.	9	0.00	6	2367	1301	0.55	0.55	-	
N 1,220	320	OFFICIALS BAKING CO.	9	0.00	1	500	185	0.37	0.37	-	
N 1,000	690	AL-FARAJ PRINTING CO.	10.7	10.82	7	4750	3325	0.71	0.70	-0.01	
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 177.91		ICMG: +0.10		469		446686		541940

Gold prices slightly recover

By Issam Qadamani

AMMAN — Gold prices increased by 400 fils for the 21 carat of gold at local markets after the global markets regained their previous "healthy position."

Goldsmiths said the Jordanian market suffered heavy losses due to the decrease of gold prices at the international level, noting that each ounce of gold lost \$20 before two weeks.

President of the Jewellers Association Anwar Jabasini

said prices are stable now and the jewellers' losses were put to an end.

The association's secretary, Galeb Sakkiha, said the local market made up for its losses emanating from the recent rise in gold prices, pointing that gold prices are expected to rise in the near future.

The 21 carat of gold are sold in the local market at JD6 up from JD5.6 two weeks ago.

"The great demand on gold led to the increase of its prices," said Sakkiha.

UAE hotel revenue rises

DUBAI (R) — Hotel revenue in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which is banking on tourism to diversify its oil-led economy, rose nine per cent last year to more than 2.98 billion dirhams (\$812 million).

A planning ministry study said this compared with income of almost 2.73 billion dirhams in 1996.

"Deluxe hotels grossed over 66 per cent of the total revenue, while the share of first class hotels was 23.35 per cent, second class 5.50 per cent and third class 5.14 per cent," it said.

Last year there were 323 hotels in the UAE, up from 304 in 1996 and 291 in 1995. Abu Dhabi had 44 hotels and Sharjah had 22 hotels in 1997.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1998

Black Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Having the whole family over to your house for a pot luck? If not, why not? They'd all love to come by and see you, and it

U.S. Open

Top players reach title showdown

NEW YORK (AP) — The world's top-ranked players reached a women's singles title showdown at the U.S. Open Friday — but in vastly contrasting styles.

Defending champion and world number-one Martina Hingis had to fight for her life to beat third-seeded Jana Novotna 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 while Davenport was never seriously troubled by last year's finalist Venus Williams.

Davenport reached the first Grand Slam final of her career after chalking up a 6-4, 6-4 win.

Hingis, who trailed 1-4 in the final set and whose world number-one ranking would have been up for grabs if she had been beaten, suddenly surged back — winning 18 of the last 22 points and five consecutive games.

She put the revival down to the fact that she had got "mad at herself."

"I knew the ranking was on the line. And after being beaten in the semi-finals at both Roland Garros and Wimbledon I was determined to go at least one step better."

"When it was 1-4 and I was sitting in my chair, I said to myself 'No way I'm going to lose again in the semi-finals — even though I had a good win against Monica in the previous

round. I told myself 'At least you've got to make the finals this time.'"

The 29-year-old Novotna, who thought she had finally put her reputation for 'choking' behind her when she won Wimbledon this Summer, refused to accept that she had lost Friday because she had lost her nerve.

She said she didn't think back to her infamous loss to Steffi Graf in the 1993 final at the All England Club when she also squandered a 4-1 lead in the decisive set.

"I think today it was a fantastic match and it could well have been a worthy final," she said.

"We both produced a wonderful display of aggressive tennis. But when I went 4-1 up, I started to miss too many approach shots and too many volleys. And you simply can't afford to do that against Martina."

Novotna, who started superbly, admitted that she had run out of steam in the second set.

"The first set took a lot out of me," she said, adding: "There were a lot of rallies and a lot of running. Everything went just a little too fast for me in the second."

The match statistics were eloquent. Novotna, the aggressor throughout, com-



Number one seeded Martina Hingis of Switzerland hangs her head during a break in her match against number three seeded Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic September 11 at the U.S. Open (AFP photo)

mitted 50 unforced errors — 20 of them in the final set — and won only 14 points in the second set.

Hingis said it had got colder after the first set and the drop in temperature had helped her.

"I'm from Switzerland. Once it gets cooler I feel better," she said.

The Swiss player, who will be 18 on September 30, said that her win over Novotna had given her "a lot of confidence."

"I know I'm in good shape and that I'm mentally strong again," she said, adding that she hoped she would be able to feed off the power of Davenport's sledgehammer groundstrokes in the final.

"I know I'm not as strong as her. But I shall try to keep the ball in play and use her power," she said.

The 1m90 Davenport was clearly elated after her win over Williams.

"It's a terrific feeling," said Davenport, who has shed some 30 pounds in the past year in a fitness regimen that is clearly paying dividends on court.

"Everything is working out just great," she said. "This time I came to the US Open not to lose in the semi and my goal is to win it."

Davenport, whose powerful ground shots overwhelmed Williams, also stayed purposeful and calm throughout.

"That's another thing I've been working on...to stay calm and be mentally tougher...and not to worry about bad points."

In fact Davenport, who has won three hard-court titles this summer, needed to stay calm and collected when Williams, who was trailing, asked for a second-set toilet break — seen by many as a deliberate ploy to break her opponent's concentration.

"I don't know if she had to go to the bathroom, but I played her a couple of weeks ago and when I got up a set and a break, she asked for an injury timeout."

"Hopefully she had to go to the bathroom. I don't know if she did but it's been happening more and more with some players lately."

Williams shrugged off the issue and refused to admit that she had been beaten by a better player.

"She's had better results than me this year," was all she would say, adding "I wasn't on top of my game today. I can play better. That's definite."

Marion Jones wins 200-metre sprint in World Cup record time

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — American Marion Jones raced to victory Friday in the women's 200-metre sprint, leading from start to finish to set a new World Cup record with a time of 21.62 seconds.

Sprinter Obadele Thompson of Barbados also set a new World Cup record, winning the men's 100 metres in 9.87 seconds — just off the world mark of 9.84. Seun Ogunkoya of Nigeria was second at 9.92, with Britain's Dwain Chambers third at 10.03.

Jones' performance gave the American star the third-fastest time ever in the women's 200, keeping her undefeated this year in women's sprints and long jump competition. Only Florence Griffith-Joyner of the United States, holder of the world record at 21.34, has run faster than Jones in the women's 200.

The winning time was a personal best for Jones, which was the goal she set coming into the World Cup — her first race at high altitude. But after the race, Jones said she felt hindered by the thin air at Johannesburg Stadium because she had not adjusted to the city's 1,650-metre altitude.

"The altitude made me feel a little sluggish," she admitted. "To run 21.62 today felt unbelievable."

Despite her concerns about sluggishness, Jones said she wasn't surprised by her speedy time.

"I'm looking forward to the 100 metres tomorrow. Any time I step onto the track, I feel capable of setting a record," she said.

The three-day, finals-only World Cup competition brings together athletes from the United States, Africa, Europe, the Americas, Oceania, Asia, and two European national squads to compete for team honours. Britain and Germany compete in the men's field, while Germany and Russia round out the women's competition.

After the first day's events, Africa topped the men's standings with 39 points, followed by the Americas with 36 and the United States with 31. In the women's field, Europe led with 43, Russia stood at 38 and the United States had 36.

In the women's 400-metre hurdles,



Marion Jones

Nezha Bidouane of Morocco sped by world record-holder and race favourite Kim Batten of the

Morgan of Jamaica was third at 48.40 for the Americas team. "This is great," Matete said. "My

48.66 seconds. Mark Everett of the United States took second at 1:48.73, with Cuba's Norberto Tellez



Obadele Thompson of Barbados celebrates victory at the 100 m final for men at the 8th IAAF world cup in athletics in Johannesburg (AFP photo)

United States in the final strides to win.

Bidouane's time of 52.96 seconds set a new World Cup record in getting the win for the Africa team. Batten, the pre-race favourite, clipped the last hurdle with her foot and faded to third in 53.17.

Deon Hemmings of Jamaica at 53.03. "I had a good end to my season and I knew that the altitude in Johannesburg would suit me," Bidouane said.

Zambia's Samuel Matete also thrilled the partisan African crowd at Johannesburg Stadium, holding on to win the men's 400 hurdles in 48.08. Al Nubi Mubarak of Qatar, representing the Asian team, finished second in 48.17 and Dinsdale

fourth time in South Africa and I never lose here."

Africa got another win from Kenyan Daniel Komen in the men's 5,000. He finished in 13:46.57.

World record-holder John Godina of the United States won the men's shot put with a heave of 21.48 metres.

Aleksandr Bagach of the Ukraine finished second at 20.45, and Germany's Oliveri-Sven Buder was third at 20.42. Svetlana Masterkova of Russia, Olympic gold medalist at Atlanta, ran to victory in the women's 1,500 in 4:09.41.

Germany's Nils Schumann claimed victory in the men's 800, with a time of 1 minute,

third at 1:48.92.

Germany also won the women's 4 x 400 relay, with the Americas team in second and Russia in third. The winning foursome of Anke Feller, Uta Rohlander, Ulrike Urbansky and Grit Breur finished in 3:24.2.

In the women's field events, the European team took first in both the triple jump and high jump. Monica Iagar-Dinescu cleared 1.98 metres to win the high jump, while Olga Vasdeki won the triple jump with a leap of 14.64.

Cuba's Ivan Pedrosa leaped 8.37 metres to win the men's long jump, while Joanna Stone of Australia claimed victory for Oceania in the women's javelin with a throw of 69.85 metres.



Number two seeded Lindsay Davenport of the U.S. celebrates her victory over number five seeded Venus Williams of the U.S. September 11 at the U.S. Open. Davenport won 6-4, 6-4 (AFP Photo).

U.S. Open Road

NEW YORK (AP) — How the men's semifinals and women's semifinals advanced at the U.S. Open:

Men
Pete Sampras (1)
First round — def. Marc-Kevin Goellner, 6-3, 6-2, 6-2.
Second round — def. Paul Goldstein, 7-6 (7-4), 2-6, 6-3, 6-3.
Third round — def. Mikael

Tillstrom, 6-2, 6-3, 6-1.
Fourth round — def. Marat Safin, 6-4, 6-3, 6-2.
Quarterfinals — def. Karol Kucera (9), 6-3, 7-5, 6-4.
Patrick Rafter (3)
First round — def. Hicham Arazi, 4-6, 4-6, 6-3, 6-3, 6-1.
Second round — def. Hernan Gury, 6-4, 6-1, 6-2.

Third round — def. David Nainkin, 6-1, 6-1, 6-1.
Fourth round — def. Goran Ivanisevic (14), 6-3, 6-4, 4-6, 6-1.
Quarterfinals — def. Jonas Bjorkman (12), 6-2, 6-3, 7-5.
Carlos Moya (10)
First round — def. Mariano Puerto, 6-1, 7-6 (7-4), 6-7 (3-7), 4-4, retired.
Second round — def. Michael

Chang, 3-6, 1-6, 7-6 (7-5), 6-4, 6-3.
Third round — def. Jan-Michael Gambill, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7-4).
Fourth round — def. Alex Corjia (7), 7-6 (7-4), 7-5, 6-3.
Quarterfinals — def. Magnus Larsson, 6-4, 6-3, 6-3.
Semifinals — vs. Mark Philippoussis.
Mark Philippoussis
First round — def. Christian Ruud, 7-5, 6-4, 6-3.
Second round — def. Sebastian Larcau, 6-7 (3-7), 6-3, 6-3, 6-4.
Third round — def. Lucas Arnold, 7-6 (7-5), 6-3, 6-3.
Fourth round — def. Tim Henman (13), 7-5, 0-6, 6-4, 6-1.
Quarterfinals — def. Thomas Johansson, 4-6, 6-3, 6-7 (3-7), 6-3, 7-6 (12-10).
Semifinals — vs. Carlos Moya (10).

Women
Martina Hingis (1)
First round — def. Aleksandra

U.S. Open at a glance

NEW YORK (AP) — Highlights of Friday's play in the \$14 million U.S. Open tennis championships:

Weather: Partly sunny and mild with a high of (26 C).

Attendance: 18,588.

Results: Defending champion Martina Hingis and Lindsay Davenport advanced to the women's championship. Hingis beat doubles partner Jana Novotna 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 and Davenport topped last year's finalist, Venus Williams, 6-4, 6-4. Fifteenth-seed Sander Stolle and Cyril Suk took the men's doubles title 4-6, 7-6 (10-8), 6-2 over No. 6 Mark Knowles and Daniel Nestor.

State of the Day: Lindsay Davenport could become the first American-born woman to win the singles title since Chris Evert in 1982.

Quote of the Day: "Both of us play such high-risk games that one of us could be off on a certain day. I was a little more consistent today when it counted." — Lindsay Davenport.

TODAY AT	PHILADELPHIA '1'	PHILADELPHIA '2'	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	Midway Theatre
	TEL: 4634144	TEL: 4634144	TEL: 5674238	TEL: 5674230	TEL: 994790	TEL: 994793	TEL: 4625155
	Sophie Marceau in Leo Tolstoy's ANNA KARENINA Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	NASSER Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Comedian Adel Imam... in AL ZA'EEM Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30 Additional shows Thursday and Friday evenings at 12:30	CONCORD '1' NASSER Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORD '2' CONTACT Shows: 8:15, 10:30 UP CLOSE & PERSONAL Shows: 3:30, 5:30 only	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria GODZILLA Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria CITY OF ANGELS Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	WATCH OUT FOR THE NEW PLAY

Iran wins World Wrestling Championships

TEHRAN (AP) — Iran won the World Wrestling Championships Friday with its wrestlers claiming a total of six medals.

Despite the dismal 6-0 loss of Iran's 130 kilo champion Rasol Khadem to Cuban Alexis Rodriguez, Iran was able to maintain its lead with two wrestlers grabbing gold in other categories.

Russia claimed second place with three medals, beating the United States on point difference.

Iran won three gold medals, two silver and one bronze while Russia and the United States each won one gold and two bronze medals.

Rodriguez astonished and

silenced the capacity crowd in the Azadi arena, completely dominating the match against Khadem, who was tipped before the encounter to easily take gold.

The fans were compensated for Khadem's loss as two other Iranians, Ali Reza Dabir and Ali Reza Heydari, defeated their opponents to win gold.

Lincoln McIlravy of the United States won the bronze after defeating Canada's D. Egal 4-1.

Throughout the four-day tournament, Iranian fans celebrated the participation of the American wrestlers by cheering for them at every opportunity.

A U.S. wrestling team

came here in February to compete in a locally organized competition in the first official visit by Americans to Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The return of the U.S. athletes is important to many Iranians, who see it as further proof of the potential for improving relations with the United States, long condemned by militant Iranians as "The Great Satan."

On Thursday, and for the first time since the revolution, the American flag was raised and the Star-Spangled Banner was played in Iran after Sam Henson won the gold medal in the 54 kilo category.

Giovanni Lombardi comes good in Tour of Spain

VALENCIA (AFP) — Italy's Giovanni Lombardi finally came good in the Tour of Spain winning the

185km seventh stage between Alicante and Valencia on Friday. Lombardi has endured a

frustrating time in the "Vuelta," finishing runner-up on four occasions, before narrowly recording a well deserved win from Jeroen Blijlevens of the Netherlands and Festina's Marcel Wust of Germany.

The result leaves the overall standings unchanged, with Spain's Jose Maria Jimenez retaining the leader's yellow jersey ahead of his compatriot Roberto Heras and Laurent Jalabert of France.

The stage was marked by an early three man break-away from Belgium's Ludo Diereckx and the Italian duo Maurizio Frizzo and Mariano Piccoli, the group establishing a five-minute lead.

But with 10km remaining the Italians fell back leaving Diereckx to push for the line alone until being swallowed up by the peloton, with Lombardi prevailing in a sprint. Saturday's 181.5km eighth stage is staged around Palma in Majorca.



Italian cyclist and member of German team Telekom, Giovanni Lombardi, grimaces after winning the 85 km seventh stage of the Tour of Spain between Alicante to Valencia, Friday (AFP photo)

Michael Schumacher captures pole position for Italian Grand Prix

MONZA (AP) — Michael Schumacher captured his first pole position of the year on Saturday as he led qualifying for the Italian Grand Prix ahead of defending world champion Jacques Villeneuve.

World championship leader Mika Hakkinen and his McLaren-Mercedes teammate David Coulthard suffered a rare qualifying setback as they finished third and fourth respectively.

The McLaren drivers, who together had captured 12 of the previous 13 poles, will both start from the second row for the first time this year.

Schumacher, who trails Hakkinen by seven points in the world standings with three championship races left, turned the fastest lap on the 5.77-kilometre (3.585-mile) Monza circuit in one minute, 25.289 seconds, or 243.548 kmph (150.999 mph).

"It was time for us to have our first pole position," said Schumacher, whose previous pole dated back to the Grand Prix of Hungary on Aug. 9 last year.

"I'm happy it came at Monza," he added, after jumping on the pits wall and raising his arms in triumph to answer frantic applause by thousands of Ferrari fans.

The Monza circuit is considered the home track of the Italian team, along with the Imola circuit which hosts the San Marino GP.

Schumacher last won the Italian GP in 1996. Coulthard took the race last year.

Schumacher, a two-time world champion, kept cold blooded as he waited for the track to dry up from morning showers and clinched the pole with two minutes left in

the one-hour session.

"We took the safe decision as we kept waiting and waiting for the track to dry up, so as to avoid wet spots," Schumacher explained. "It's a great result and a great position for the race. We will be there (for victory) tomorrow."

Most drivers roared off the pits in the last 25 minutes of qualifying to take advantage of better track condition. But resulting traffic hampered some attempts of fast turns.

"Traffic slowed me down but I'm still in a good position for the race," said Hakkinen, who enters Sunday's race with a record of six GP wins and eight pole positions this year.

He leads his German rival and top title contender 77 to 70 points.

Schumacher delighted an overwhelming majority of

Ferrari supporters as he edged Villeneuve by 0.27 seconds and Hakkinen by 0.39 seconds.

Coulthard, who had been involved in a controversial collision with Schumacher in the Grand Prix of Belgium last month, had a gap of 0.69 seconds.

Villeneuve, who earned his first season start from the front row in a Williams-Mecachrome, said he could have done even better without a mistake on his last lap.

"I hope of dry conditions tomorrow, as it would make the race easier," the Canadian driver said.

Eddie Irvine, Ferrari's No.2 driver and the fastest driver in Friday's free practice, trailed the teammate by 0.87 seconds in fifth place.

Y.W.C.A./Amman Choir Singing

Y.W.C.A.

The Y.W.C.A.'s 4-voice choir will be starting preparations for its Annual Christmas Concert that will be held December 7th, 8th, 9th & 10th/1998.

The programme includes contemporary pieces, traditional carols, and Arabic pieces. This year the choir will be accompanied by a children's choir as well. Rehearsals for the adult choir will be every Tuesday at the Y.W.C.A. hall, 3rd Circle, beginning this Tuesday 15/9/1998 from 7:30-10:00 p.m.

Any experience with choral singing would be helpful.

For inquiries please call the Y.W.C.A. on telephones 4641119/4641793 between 9-1 a.m. & 3-6 p.m. except Sundays & Fridays.

Commonwealth Games

Men from Land Down Under impose authority

KUALA LUMPUR (R)

— The men from the Land Down Under wasted no time on Saturday in imposing their authority on the Commonwealth Games.

With sun smiling on the opening day of the debut Games in Asia, Australian cyclist Jay Sweet took the honour of the first gold medal while his teenage swimming compatriots Ian Thorpe and Simon Cowley ploughed their way to decisive wins.

A win by the women in the 200 metres freestyle relay set Australia on the way to repeating their feat of most medals at the last Games in 1994 in Victoria, Canada.

At the end of the first day Australia had taken four of the seven gold medals on offer.

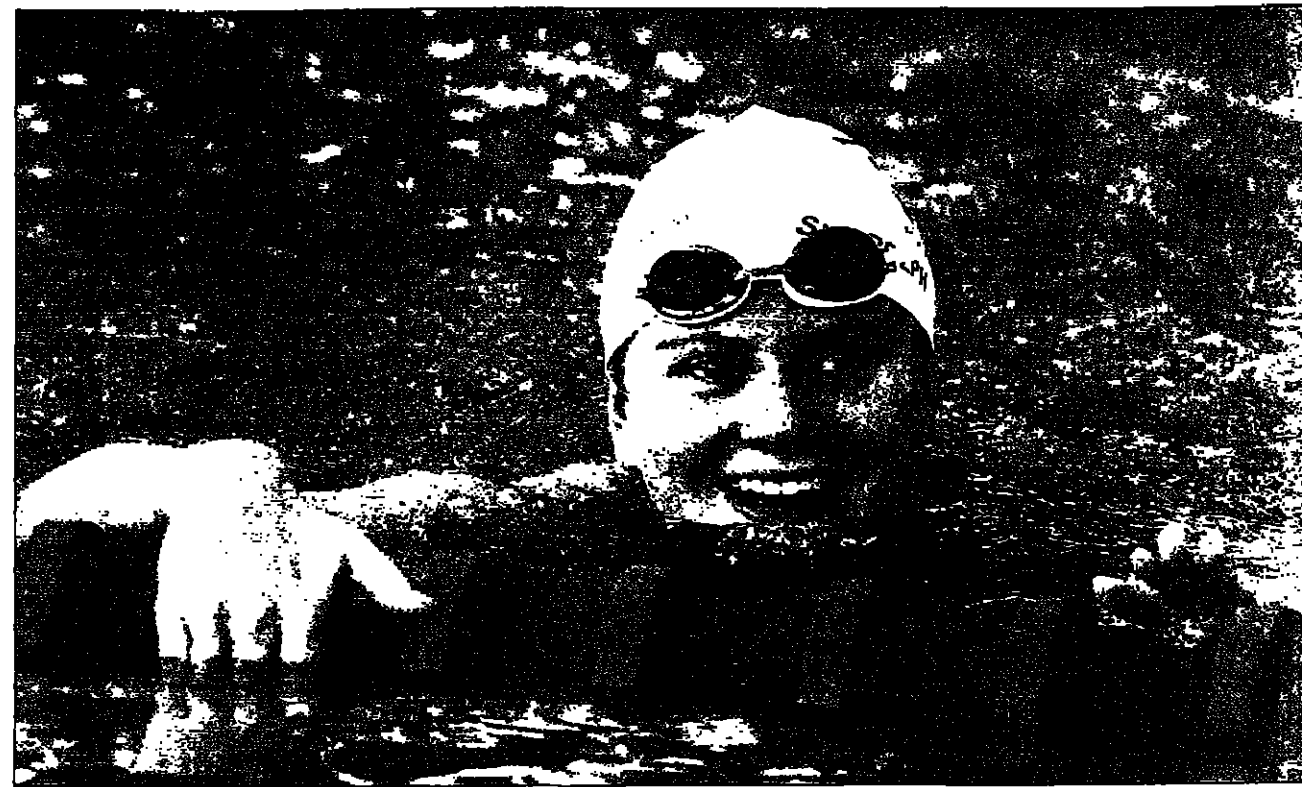
More than 4,200 athletes from 70 nations and territories, from Anguilla to Zimbabwe, are gathered to compete in the biggest Games ever which last until September 21.

The competition among countries of the old British Empire, the biggest multi-sports event after the Olympics, gave Malaysians a chance to forget briefly economic recession and political turmoil.

They turned out in force after a highly praised opening ceremony on Friday night to watch the tussle between Australia and the rest of the Commonwealth.

An added bonus was a surprise Malaysian silver in cycling and at least a bronze in the women's badminton.

Sue Rolph, the up-and-coming star of women's freestyle swimming, gave England their first



British swimmer Sue Rolph smiles after breaking the Commonwealth Games record in the women's 100m freestyle on Saturday during the XVI Commonwealth Games at the National Aquatic Center in Kuala Lumpur. Rolph clocked 55:65 seconds, taking the record away from fellow Briton Karen Pickering, who clocked 56:20 in the 1994 Games (AFP photo)

gold in the 100 metres while

Joanne Malar of Canada won her first major title in taking the 400 metres individual medley.

England added a second gold medal when their men won the artistic gymnastics team title.

The day's drama was provided by swim prodigy Thorpe, already the youngest world champion in the 400 metres.

The 15-year-old Sydney schoolboy fell an agonising one-hundredth of a second short of breaking the oldest world record in men's swimming in winning the 200 metres freestyle in Kuala Lumpur's state-of-the-art pool.

He left world champion and team mate Michael Klim trailing in his wake throughout the race as he sped home in one minute 46.70 — a fingertip short of the world mark of 1:46.69 set by Italy's Giorgio Lamberti nine years ago.

"It was close, wasn't it? I can't believe I got down that low. I was hoping, but you never know until you look at the scoreboard," said Thorpe.

Klim, whose world title made him clear pre-Games favourite, lagged by more than a second to take the silver medal in 1:48.05.

Fellow Australian Daniel Kowalski took the bronze in 1:48.26.

Thorpe, powered by

size 17 feet, had to be content with just a Commonwealth record.

The victory lines the "Thorpedo" up to become the biggest star of the Commonwealth Games swimming competition. He will swim in up to six events and is clear favourite in the 400 metres freestyle.

Australia's other teenage "Dolphin" Cowley, 17, finished nearly half a second ahead of the field in winning the 100 metres breaststroke.

Veteran Phil Rogers made it an Australian one-two with England's Darren Mew taking the bronze.

England's Rolph was another Commonwealth record breaker, on the

opening day.

The 20-year-old from Newcastle, who won relay gold over the same distance at the last Games in Canada four years ago, sped through the water to win her first major individual title in 55.17. That shattered the Games record of 55.65 she set earlier in the day.

Australia won silver and bronze. Susie O'Neill touching home in 55.58 and Rebecca Creevy in 56.07.

The day started with a brave win by Sweet in the 184 km road race, the most gruelling of the cycling events.

He overcame an agonising leg cramp in the last seconds to just hold off Malaysia's Rosli

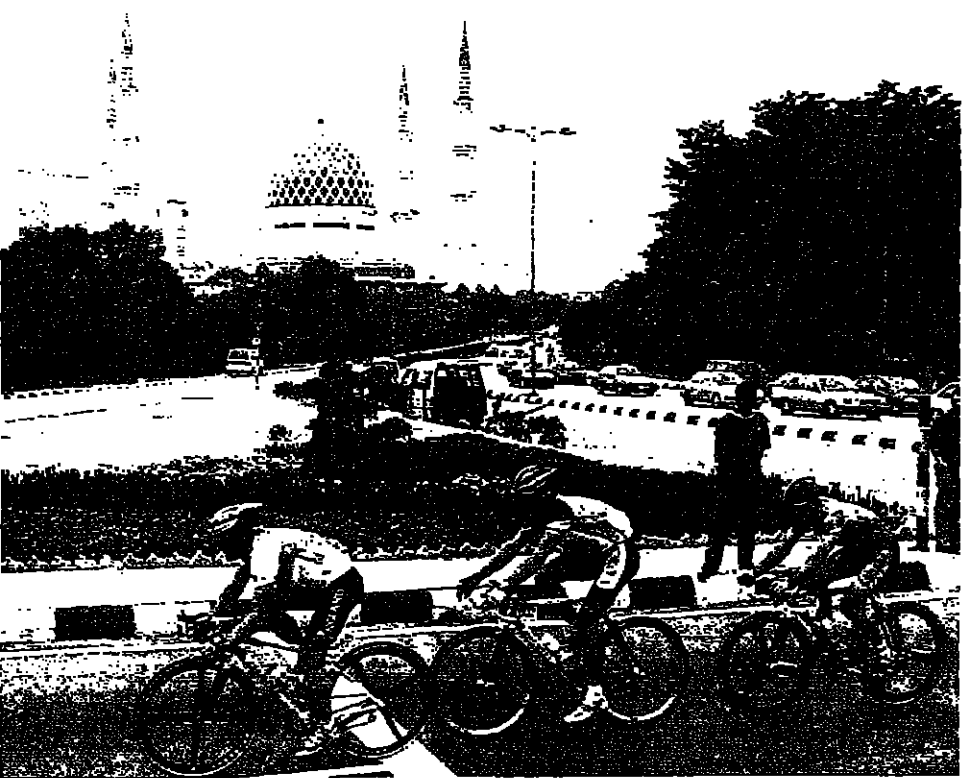
Effandy, who won his country's first medal in the sport, with Eric Wohlberg of Canada taking bronze.

The three medallists and two other cyclists rode together for the final 20 km. After more than four and a half hours of racing the finish came down to a hectic sprint in the last kilometre.

After crossing the finish line in four hours 31 minutes 57 seconds,

Sweet, a professional who rides in Europe, jumped off his bike in pain and started massaging his knee.

Malaysia's women sprung a surprise in the women's badminton by edging out top seeds New Zealand to grab a berth in the last four of the team competition and ensure themselves of at least a bronze, if not better.



Chris Lillywhite (L) of England leads the lead pack, followed by Matthew White of Australia (C) and Sylvain Beauchamp (R) of Canada as they ride past the Sultan Sallehuddin Mosque in Shah Alam during the 10th lap of the Commonwealth Games' men's road race cycling on Saturday in Kuala Lumpur (AFP photo)

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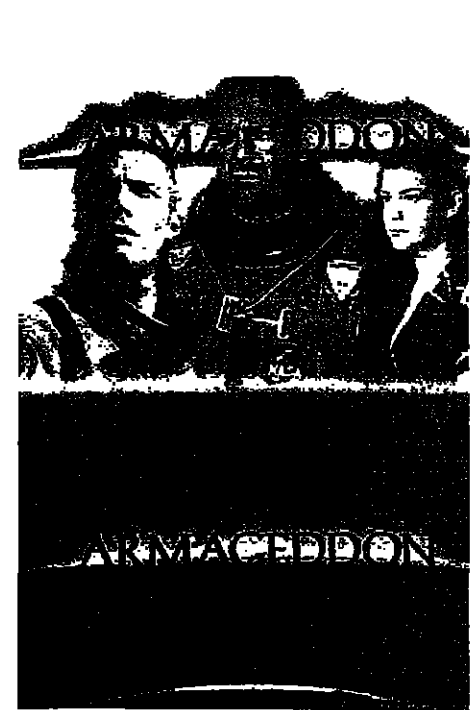
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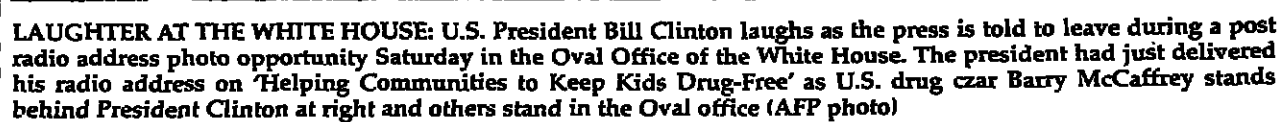
COMING SOON GALLERIA

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Amid U.S. frustration

profitable sectors of Russian industry and let hyperinflation" build up, said Andrei Piontkovsky, who heads a Moscow strategic study centre.



BUCHAREST (APF) — The world's top auctioneers are bidding to auction off possessions of the late Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, including a collection of cars given to him by world leaders.

The auction said Friday. Three leading auction houses including Brook's were interested in holding the sale, said Mihail Nica, the head of the government's heritage reservation department. He had previously mentioned Sotheby's and Christie's. The auction of thousands of items that belonged to Romania's deposed communist leader, executed along with his wife Elena in 1989, was announced in July. The government hopes to raise several million dollars from the sale.

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